

Meghalaya Ready For Block I Talks, Awaits Assam Decision

Shillong, Aug 05: Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong has confirmed that the state is fully prepared to initiate discussions on the long-pending Block I boundary issue with Assam. However, he emphasized that the talks can only move forward once Assam formally names the chairperson of its regional committee. Speaking to reporters, Dhar reiterated Meghalaya's commitment to resolving inter-state boundary disputes through dialogue and cooperation. He noted that the government has already constituted its own regional committee and is awaiting Assam's corresponding appointment to begin the next round of talks. Block I, located in the West Jaintia Hills district, has been a point of contention between the two states for decades. The area, inhabited by communities with cultural and economic ties to both



states, has witnessed repeated demands for clarity on administrative jurisdiction. Officials stated that the upcoming talks are expected to focus on ground realities, community sentiments, and historical records to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution. Meghalaya has assured that its approach will be guided by fairness, transparency, and respect for the people living in the disputed areas. "The government of Meghalaya is ready. We have completed our internal

preparations. Now we await Assam's decision to name its committee chair so that discussions can formally begin," Dhar said. Observers note that the resolution of Block I is part of the broader effort by both states to settle six remaining boundary disputes following the signing of the first phase agreement in 2022. That accord successfully resolved issues in six other areas of difference, setting a precedent for cooperative dialogue. Civil society groups and local lead-

ers have welcomed Meghalaya's readiness, urging both governments to expedite the process to bring lasting peace and administrative clarity to affected communities. The Meghalaya government has expressed optimism that once Assam names its committee chair, talks can commence promptly, paving the way for a negotiated settlement that strengthens inter-state relations and ensures stability in the border regions.

Asked about the demand to retransfer Block I to Meghalaya, the Deputy CM said Meghalaya has nearly completed its homework. "We have done whatever homework is required from our part. The officers have almost completed. Once all reports are ready, we will first sit within the state, and then inform Assam. When they form their committee, both committees will sit and take a call," he said.

Draft electoral roll published in West Garo Hills

Tura, Aug 05: The Election Department has officially published the draft electoral roll for West Garo Hills district, marking an important step in the electoral process ahead of upcoming polls. The publication provides citizens with the opportunity to verify their details and ensure accuracy in the voter list. Officials confirmed that the draft roll has been made available at designated offices and public locations across the district. Citizens are encouraged to check their names, addresses, and other particulars carefully. Any corrections, additions, or objections can be submitted to the concerned Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) within the stipulated period. The publication of the draft roll is part of the Election Commission's standard procedure to maintain transparency and inclusivity in the electoral



process. It ensures that eligible voters are not left out and that errors are rectified before the final roll is prepared. District election authorities have appealed to residents to actively participate in the verification exercise. "The draft roll is open for public scrutiny. We urge all eligible voters to check their entries and file claims or objections if necessary. This is vital to ensure free and fair elections," an official stated. Special arrangements have been made to facilitate access in

rural and remote areas, with local officials tasked to assist citizens in reviewing the draft. Awareness campaigns are also being conducted to inform residents about the importance of voter list verification. The final electoral roll will be published after the claims and objections process is completed. Authorities emphasized that the integrity of the electoral roll is fundamental to the democratic process, as it directly impacts the conduct of elections in the district.

Bridge Washed Away, Traffic Diverted

Dimapur, Aug 05: Vehicular movement between Chümoukedima, Jalukie and Peren has been diverted after a temporary bridge between Jhamapani and Molvom was washed away by floodwaters triggered by incessant rainfall. The Commissioner of Police, Dimapur, on Wednesday issued a traffic advisory directing commuters to use alternate routes until the affected stretch is restored.

According to the advisory, light motor vehicles travelling between Chümoukedima and Peren have been advised to take the route from 7th Mile Junction, Chümoukedima, to Pimla Village via Shokhuvi Village. An alternative route has also been designated from New Chümoukedima (Iron Structure Bridge) to Galili Village via Ruzaphema Village. Heavy motor vehicles have been diverted from Medziphema to Punglwa Village via Sirhi Angami Village and Sochunoma Village.

4 wildlife smugglers arrested in M'laya with elephant tusks, pangolin scales

Shillong, Aug 05: Wildlife officials have arrested four wildlife smugglers and seized four elephant tusks and two polythene bags containing pangolin scales from their possession in Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district, wildlife officials said on Tuesday.

Acting on specific intelligence inputs from Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) regarding suspected illegal wildlife trade along the Nongpoh-Umden Road, the wildlife enforcement team intercepted two suspects matching the intelligence inputs at Umwang road. "Four elephant tusks, suspected to be of Asiatic Elephant (*Elephas maximus*), were recovered from the possession of Tras Khyndeit and Wilshon Khyndeit, both residents of Ri-Bhoi district," the wildlife official said.

In another intelli-



gence-based operation conducted on Sunday at Shakhoikuna village in Ri-Bhoi district, the Nongpoh Wildlife Range intercepted three suspected individuals and seized two bags of suspected pangolin scales from their possession.

However, one of the accused managed to escape from the scene, the official

said, adding that one of the arrested accused was identified as Benedick Khyndeit of Ri Bhoi district, and Rupai Ingti of Assam's Kamrup district.

Wildlife official have seized wildlife articles and the arrested persons have been booked under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

A separate case has been registered at the Nongpoh Wildlife Range, and further investigation is in progress.

Elephants and pangolins are among India's most protected wildlife species under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. Illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife derivatives poses a serious threat to the country's biodiversity

and natural heritage, the official said, noting that the Meghalaya Forest department remains committed to combating wildlife crime. The department also appeals to members of the public to report any information relating to illegal hunting, possession, transportation, or trade in wildlife and wildlife articles to the nearest Forest office. This coordinated action highlights the growing effectiveness of intelligence-driven enforcement in tackling organized wildlife crime. Authorities noted that collaboration between state forest departments and national agencies like WCCB is essential to dismantle trafficking networks that often operate across state borders. The arrests and seizures in Ri-Bhoi are expected to serve as a strong deterrent against future attempts at smuggling endangered species.

Assam Rifles Seize Medicinal Plant, Five Arrested In Mizoram

Aizawl, Aug 05: In a major enforcement action against illegal trade in endangered flora, Assam Rifles personnel have seized a large consignment of protected medicinal plants valued at ₹1.05 crore in Mizoram. Five individuals have been arrested in connection with the case. Acting on specific intelligence inputs, the Assam Rifles launched a coordinated operation in Mizoram's border areas, intercepting suspects engaged in the illegal possession and transportation of the plants. Officials confirmed that the seized items fall under the category of protected species, whose trade is strictly prohibited under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. The arrested individuals have been booked under relevant provisions of the law, and further investigation is underway to trace the larger network involved in the smuggling. Authorities suspect that the consignment was intended



for cross-border trafficking, given Mizoram's proximity to international boundaries. Officials emphasized that the illegal trade in medicinal plants poses a serious threat to biodiversity and undermines conservation efforts. Many of these species are critical to traditional medicine and ecological balance, making their protection a national priority.

"This seizure highlights our commitment to safeguarding India's natural heritage. The Assam Rifles will continue to intensify operations against wildlife

and plant trafficking in the Northeast," a senior official stated.

The operation has been welcomed by conservation groups, who view it as a strong deterrent against organized trafficking networks. They stressed that protecting endangered plants is as vital as protecting endangered animals, since both are integral to ecological sustainability. The Assam Rifles have assured that the seized plants will be handed over to forest authorities for proper disposal in accordance with environmental guidelines.

MNF Demands Apology From CM Lalduhoma Over Remarks

Aizawl, Aug 05: The Mizo National Front (MNF) has formally demanded an apology from Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma following his recent remarks on the historic Mizo Peace Accord and the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system. The party stated that the comments were "unwarranted" and "disrespectful" to the sacrifices and legacy of the Mizo people. In a statement issued by MNF leaders, the party expressed deep concern over Lalduhoma's observations, which they claim undermine the significance of the 1986 Peace Accord that ended decades of insurgency and restored normalcy in Mizoram. The MNF emphasized that the Accord remains a cornerstone of Mizoram's identity and political stability, and any attempt to diminish its importance is unacceptable. The party also objected to Lalduhoma's remarks on the ILP, a system that regulates the entry of outsiders into Mizoram and safeguards the rights of indigenous communities. MNF leaders argued that the ILP is not merely an adminis-



trative mechanism but a vital protective measure enshrined in law to preserve Mizoram's cultural and demographic balance. "The Chief Minister's comments have hurt the sentiments of the Mizo people. We demand a public apology and clarification to restore trust and respect," the MNF statement read. Political observers note that the demand reflects growing tensions between the ruling government and opposition parties in Mizoram. The Peace Accord, signed between the MNF and the Government of India, is widely regarded as one of the most successful peace agreements

in the country, and any controversy surrounding it carries significant political weight. The MNF has urged the Chief Minister to acknowledge the sensitivities involved and reaffirm his commitment to protecting Mizoram's historical and cultural foundations. The party further stated that it will continue to raise the issue in public forums until an apology is issued. Meanwhile, the Chief Minister's office has not yet responded to the MNF's demand. The development is expected to spark further debate in the state's political circles, with civil society groups closely watching the outcome.

Shillong, Aug 05: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Meghalaya for extending a ₹1 crore contribution toward flood relief efforts in Assam. The announcement was made today as the state continues to battle widespread flooding that has affected thousands of families across multiple districts. The contribution was formally conveyed by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, underscoring the spirit of solidarity and cooperation between the two neighboring states. Assam's Chief Minister described the gesture as a reflection of Meghalaya's compassion and commitment to regional unity. "Sincere gratitude to Meghalaya for standing with Assam in this hour of need. This support will strengthen our relief and rehabilitation measures," CM Sarma stated in a social media post. Officials confirmed that the funds will be directed toward immediate relief operations, including the distribution of food, medicines, and essen-

Assam CM Thanks Meghalaya CM For ₹1 Crore Flood Relief Aid



tial supplies to flood-affected families. The contribution will also aid in rehabilitation programs aimed at restoring livelihoods and rebuilding damaged infrastructure. The floods in Assam have displaced thousands, with several districts reporting severe damage to homes, agricultural land, and public utilities. Relief camps have been set

up across the state, and the government has mobilized resources to ensure timely assistance to affected communities. Civil society groups and citizens have welcomed Meghalaya's contribution, noting that such inter-state cooperation strengthens resilience in times of crisis. The gesture is expected to inspire similar support from

other quarters, reinforcing the collective responsibility of states in addressing humanitarian challenges. The Assam Government has assured transparency in the utilization of relief funds and emphasized that every contribution will be accounted for in ongoing rehabilitation efforts. With Meghalaya's support, Assam hopes to accelerate

recovery and provide relief to those most in need. Beyond financial assistance, the contribution also symbolizes the importance of regional solidarity in disaster management. Experts note that collaboration between states in sharing resources, expertise, and manpower can significantly enhance the effectiveness of relief operations.

Meghalaya Launches Mission Clouded Leopard to Secure State Animal



Shillong, Aug 05: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma launched Mission Clouded Leopard on August 4. The initiative coincides with International Clouded Leopard Day. It serves as a flagship program to preserve the state animal. Known as *Neofelis nebulosa* scientifically, the cat is called Maccha Pheng in Garo, Lakrong in Khasi, and Khla in Jaintia. The Forest and Environment Department is currently drafting the Meghalaya Clouded Leopard Action Plan. This document will dictate the mission's strategic roadmap. Officials aim to improve habitat connectivity and anti-poaching measures. The plan relies on scientific research, staff training, and deep community involvement. It also coordinates conservation efforts with neighboring northeastern states. The species currently holds a vulnerable status on the IUCN Red List. It maintains high-level legal protection under Appendix I of CITES and Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. Habitat fragmentation, snaring, and climate change pose

major risks. The cat is a vital nocturnal predator. Researchers identified 21 individual leopards in the Balpakram landscape. They are now expanding surveys to major habitats like Nokrek, Baghmara, Narpuh, and Nongkhylliem to create the state's first comprehensive population estimate. P.K. Agrahari, Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), expressed optimism about these findings. He noted, "I expressed confidence that the population could reach the hundreds if similar surveys are conducted across the state."

The Meghalaya Biodiversity Board and Indian Youth Biodiversity Network also held an event at Sylvan House. They emphasized conservation in non-protected, community-managed forests. D. Sathiyam, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, stressed the role of local grassroots stewardship. Traditional institutions and youth remain vital to the mission. Sangma called on all citizens to work together for the long-term survival of the species.

Water crisis likely as PHE workers threaten strike

Shillong, Aug 05: Residents dependent on Public Health Engineering water supply in several parts of the state are likely to face disruptions from Thursday if muster roll workers go ahead with their threat to stop work over unpaid wages.

The Joint Action Committee Muster Roll Workers Union on Tuesday warned that workers would cease work unless wages from April to July 2026, along with the revised Variable Dearness Allowance, are credited within two days. The stoppage is expected to hit PHE schemes in Shillong, Jowai, Tura, Nongpoh and Nongstoin.

The warning came after union leaders met Chief Engineer (PHE) Robert Sing Nongbri on Monday. He informed them that funds for April to August had already been allotted and



assured that the pending wages and revised VDA would be paid within two days.

Besides clearing the dues, the union has reiterated demands for implementation of the

Employees' Provident Fund, enforcement of the Meghalaya Regular Casual Workers Scheme, registration under the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board, and category upgradation for workers who have completed more than five years of service. The Chief Engineer said these remaining issues would be taken up during August.

Union chairperson D. Iakai said the continued delay has caused severe financial hardship to workers and their families, many of whom depend entirely on their monthly earnings for survival. The union cautioned that if the wages do not reach bank accounts within the stipulated period, several workers may be forced to seek alternative employment to meet essential expenses such as food, school fees and house rent.

Self-proclaimed anti-drug advocates receive life sentences for assault and extortion

Itanagar, Aug 05: The sessions court here in Papum Pare district has sentenced self-styled anti-drug activist Togo Rebe and his associate Kishor Tamang to life imprisonment after convicting them in an 11-year-old abduction-for-ransom case, holding that they had illegally detained a man, assaulted him, and extorted money from his family under the guise of anti-drug activities. The court of Sessions Judge Dr Hirendra Kashyap sentenced the two convicts to imprisonment for life under Section 364A, read with Section 34 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), and imposed a fine of Rs 20,000 on each. They were also prosecuted under Section 323 of the IPC for voluntarily causing hurt.

The sentencing order was passed on 3 August after the court heard submissions from the prosecution, the defence counsel and the convicts on the quantum of punishment. During the hearing, Rebe's counsel pleaded for leniency, arguing that he is a first-time offender, a single parent of a six-year-old child, and has no previous criminal record. The defence further claimed that the victim had been using Rebe's name while allegedly selling drugs, and that he had merely been detained for questioning without any criminal

intent. Tamang's counsel also sought a lenient sentence, citing his clean antecedents and his responsibility towards his aged mother. However, additional public prosecutor N Kago argued that the offence attracted the minimum punishment prescribed under Section 364A IPC, and sought life imprisonment for both convicts. Rejecting the plea for leniency, the court observed that Rebe had projected himself as the president of a self-styled anti-drug youth organisation and had been taking the law into his own hands. It noted that the convicts abducted the victim, detained him overnight until police rescued him, physically assaulted him, and demanded Rs 1.5 lakh from his father for his safe release. The court also recorded that Rs 20,000 was deposited into Tamang's bank account as part of the ransom demand.

While acknowledging the absence of previous criminal records and considering the age of the convicts as mitigating factors, the court ruled that the gravity of the offence outweighed those considerations and held that they were not entitled to the benefit of probation or relief under Section 360 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

According to the judgment delivered on 22



July, the prosecution proved beyond reasonable doubt that the victim, Akhun Wangsa, was abducted near Capital Petrol Pump in Itanagar on 7 May, 2015, after being lured to the spot.

He was forcibly taken to Rebe's residence, assaulted, and kept in confinement overnight. During his detention, Rebe allegedly contacted Wangsa's father and demanded Rs 1.5 lakh for his release, threatening harm if the money was not paid. The victim's father, Amuk Wangsa, deposited Rs 20,000 into Tamang's bank account as the first instalment of the ransom before informing the Bordumsa police. Acting on the information, the Itanagar police traced the victim to Rebe's residence, rescued him, and arrested the ac-

cused.

Bank records and the deposit counterfoil formed part of the prosecution's evidence during the trial. The case was headed by then sub-inspector K Pertin as the investigating officer.

In its judgment, the court held that private individuals, irrespective of their claims of fighting drug abuse, have no authority to apprehend, detain or punish any person outside the framework of law. It observed that Rebe, by portraying himself as the head of an anti-drug organisation, had taken unlawful action for personal gain, and that the prosecution had successfully established the offences of abduction for ransom and voluntarily causing hurt beyond reasonable doubt.

Flood-hit people dependent on mining in Nagaland: Assam CM



Itanagar, Aug 05: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday claimed that most of the people affected in Upper Assam flood depend on coal-sand mining activities in neighbouring Nagaland, and they must decide on closing the "illegal" ones.

Sarma's statement came following opposition's demand to shut all illegal coal-sand mining to prevent a recurrence of floods in Upper Assam districts.

After visiting some flood-hit areas, he also said that Assam cannot stop any mining taking place in Nagaland, and the central government will have to be involved in the process.

In the latest wave of floods, widespread devastation occurred in Sivasagar and Charaideo districts, especially in the bordering areas of Assam-Nagaland, while at least 87 people died and nearly 1.3 lakh others were impacted.

Opposition parties like Congress, Rajiwar Dal and Assam Jatiya Parishad, along with peasant body Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, have alleged that devastating floods in Upper Assam districts

were "man-made" as they result from a nexus between coal-stone mafias and influential political leaders from Assam and Nagaland.

"All people in those affected places depend on mining. So, I have requested the public to give a decision," Sarma told reporters here.

Stones come from Nagaland as mining takes place in that state, and Assam cannot go and stop mining in the neighbouring state, he added. "We can stop the stone crushers at Bihubor (in Assam). Coal mining also does not take place in Assam, it happens in Nagaland. We cannot dictate what policy the Nagaland government will take," he said.

Assam government will try to talk to Nagaland through the central government, he added. "No illegal mining takes place inside Assam. I will try to talk myself once this flood situation improves," Sarma said. When asked if illegal mining is responsible for such huge devastation, he said the government will have to take the experts' opinion to find the exact reason.

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However, one of the accused managed to escape from the scene, the official said, adding that one of the



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Act, 1972.

Illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife derivatives poses a serious threat to the country's biodiversity and natural heritage, the official said, noting that the Meghalaya Forest department remains committed to combating wildlife crime.

The department also appeals to members of the public to report any information relating to illegal hunting, possession, transportation, or trade in wildlife and wildlife articles to the nearest Forest office.

AFTF announces march for scrapping of 80:20 recruitment ratio

Shillong, Aug 05: Arunachal Frontier Tribal Front (AFTF) chairman Tadak Nalo on Tuesday announced a peaceful march on 8 August, demanding the scrapping of the 80:20 job reservation ratio.

Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, the AFTF chairman said that the march will be held on the same date as the Quit India Movement (8 August) as a symbol of peaceful agitation, demanding the scrapping of the 80:20 ratio. Nalo further accused the Chief Minister Pema Khandu-led government of "arrogance" for ignoring the organisation's repeated demand. "The government's arrogance on the 80:20 ratio issue will compel us to launch a 'do or die' agitation if our peaceful



and democratic means are not heeded," Nalo said.

Earlier, the government had denied permission for a peaceful agitation planned on 11 July, stating that it was already working on the 80:20 ratio issue. "We have been hearing for the last four years that the government is working on the issue,"

Nalo said, and accused the state government of "resorting to delaying tactics" by constituting a high-level committee headed by former education minister Taba Tedir. "If the government is at all serious and sincere about scrapping the 80:20 ratio, it does not need a high-level committee. It can be scrapped on the same

lines as the governments of Manipur and Mizoram did. They did not scrap it by constituting a high-level committee," he said. "So far, we have been raising the issue legally, reasonably, and intellectually," he said. "On 31 July, we called on the district magistrate, superintendent of police, and Itanagar Municipal Corporation commissioner, seeking permission for a peaceful march on 8 August from Akashdeep to Indira Gandhi Park to express our sentiments," he added. He reiterated that the 8 August march is significant as it marks the Quit He appealed to the people of Arunachal Pradesh to participate in the march, "irrespective of political affiliations, community, and religious institutions."

Namsai police bust heroin ring arrest four suspects

Shillong, Aug 05: Namsai police smashed a local drug ring on August 3. Officers arrested four men at 6:45 pm following a tip about narcotics activity near the Circuit House. Deputy Superintendent of Police Kengo Dirchi led the raid with help from the Ail Namsai Area Youth Association. Police nabbed Chow Nakalan Mein, 40, Gopal Chetry, 40, Suresh Gour, 37, and Janu Urang, 28.

Nakalan Mein is a habitual peddler with three prior arrests under the NDPS Act. Authorities recovered 60 grams gross and 9 grams net of suspected heroin. They also seized 61,440 rupees in cash, two lighters, and 20 syringes. Officers booked the group under sections 21(b), 27A, and 29 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. Superintendent of Police Sangey Thinley supervised the operation. Investigators are now digging into the fi-



nancial trail to find where the drugs originated.

Namsai Police stated, "Namsai Police reiterated its commitment to stringent action against drug trafficking and appealed to members of the public to share credible information, assuring that the identity of informants would be kept strictly confidential."

Stalin Junior claims that the arrest was a diversionary drama

New Delhi, Aug 05: Following a day of intense drama in which the DMK leader was jailed and subsequently freed by the court, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay and Leader of the Opposition Udhayanidhi Stalin faced off in the Assembly on Wednesday. Udhayanidhi Stalin aimed his weapons at the Chief Minister and his administration, while Vijay refrained from commenting on the arrest. The TVK government orchestrated the drama of Udhayanidhi Stalin’s detention to deflect attention from state difficulties before to the budget, according to Stalin, who was detained for allegedly making disparaging remarks about actor Trisha. Following the TVK government’s maiden budget presentation in the Assembly, the DMK leader said, “The arrest drama happened yesterday to divert attention from many important issues.” Stalin also took a swipe at the Chief Minister’s silence on his arrest. “You should ask him. He is the one who is silent,” the Leader of Opposition told mediapersons outside the Assembly. Udhayanidhi Stalin was arrested from his Chennai home on Tuesday morning following a TVK complaint over his remarks against actor Trisha at a public event. The Madras High Court later on the same day directed the Tamil Nadu Police to release Udhayanidhi after completing his questioning



in connection with the case. Udhayanidhi denied making any derogatory remarks during his speech. “They cut, copied, and pasted my speech to claim I spoke inappropriately. Some have accused me of using double meanings. I spoke with only a single meaning: the farmers need water. I have absolutely no intention of disrespecting women. I view every mother and sister in Tamil Nadu as my own family,” he clarified after being released from detention. Reacting to the Vijay government’s first budget, Udhayanidhi Stalin dubbed it a “zero budget”. “The government was established one hundred days ago. This government will receive zero points from the public. “This budget is zero,” Udhayanidhi Stalin stated. “All the schemes introduced by this government were announced by the DMK,” he claimed, accusing the Vijay government of renaming and rebranding programs of the previous DMK government. The schemes’ names

have merely been altered. The TVK government’s first budget was presented to the Assembly on Wednesday by Tamil Nadu Finance Minister N Marie Wilson, who also praised Chief Minister Vijay for a number of efforts, such as ending the practice of taking “cut” in tenders for certain parties and individuals. Additionally, the government allocated more than Rs 1,300 crore for two gold aid programs—two of the TVK’s main promises—while claiming that efforts were being made to lift Tamil Nadu out of a “financial crunch.” Wilson advised the Center to abandon the qualifying exam and return to the previous system of medical admissions based on Class 12 marks, reiterating that the TVK regime opposes NEET. Udhayanidhi Stalin attacked Vijay on the NEET issue, claiming that his government had brought legal action against students who demonstrated against the NEET paper leak.

In the midst of the House impasse, Rahul Gandhi flatly rejected Kiren Rijiju’s request for a delimitation bill

New Delhi, Aug 05: Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju contacted Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday in an attempt to break the impasse as the Parliament deadlock entered its third week of the Monsoon Session, according to sources. According to sources, Rijiju met Gandhi in his chamber just minutes after the Lok Sabha was adjourned amid slogans from the opposition. Sources claim that Rijiju asked Congress for assistance with the Women’s Reservation Amendment Bill and the Delimitation Bill, which the government is eager to reintroduce in the current session. However, the sources claim that Rahul Gandhi flatly rejected the government’s proposal. The Leader of Opposition told Kiren Rijiju that there can be no



business in the House until there is a discussion on the alleged donation theft at the Ram Mandir and a statement by Home Minister Amit Shah on police action against students during the July 20 protest in the Capital, sources said. According to sources, Kiren Rijiju met with the Home Minister and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to address the Parliament deadlock after seeing Rahul Gandhi. The government’s effort to enact the Delimi-

tation Bill this session has been thwarted by the uncompromising opposition. According to insiders, the administration had planned to push through the controversial bill that failed in the previous session on the strength of fresh numbers in the House due to defections from the Trinamool Congress and Uddhav Thackeray’s Shiv Sena. Amit Shah has been singled out by the opposition for a statement in the House over

the crackdown on students. The government has denied the accusation made by the opposition, stating that the magistrate, not the Home Minister, makes the decision about the use of force during a protest. The Opposition, led by the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, has also been attacking the Centre over the alleged donation theft at the Ram Mandir and has been demanding a discussion on the subject. For several days, Opposition MPs have been protesting with symbolic donation boxes inside the Parliament complex to target the government. Since the Monsoon Session began on July 20, the Lok Sabha has not been able to complete Question Hour. Five bills have been passed without discussion amid the din. Lok Sabha proceedings were again ad-

journed on Wednesday as the Opposition continued its sloganeering over various issues, including police action against students. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla requested that members return to their seats so that Question Hour may begin as soon as the House convened. Both inside and outside the House, sloganeering is detrimental to democracy. Birla addressed Opposition members, “You are diminishing the dignity of the House by displaying placards and sloganeering.” Birla stated that the House was unable to start Question Hour because of the disturbance caused by the Opposition during the current Monsoon Session, despite numerous members approaching him to explain that critical questions were listed.

SC rejects a challenge to the SCBA resolution endorsing the Wangchuk hunger strike

New Delhi, Aug 05: In support of activist Sonam Wangchuk’s hunger strike against the examination paper leaks, the Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected a petition contesting a Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Executive Committee resolution. It dismissed the petition and noted that the resolution is a component of their internal operations. According to the association’s regulations, the democratic process

is the most effective way to resolve any complaints against the resolution, the court stated. The petitioner was able to approach the committee as a result. A bench made up of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant, Justices Joymalya Bagchi, and V Mohana stated that if the court meddles in a bar association’s democratic process, it will set a hazardous precedent because democracy always promotes dialectics and oppos-

ing viewpoints. Ashish Gopal Garg, the petitioner, challenged the July 16 resolution, arguing that a single viewpoint could not be applied to the whole bar. “If they are going to commend Wangchuk, we will not accept it. It appears from the resolution that the group as a whole agreed with it. The court advised against using “we” in representing the entire bar and suggested convening a general body meeting to resolve disputes.

Garg highlighted issues of “institutional conscience” and “systemic failures” affecting citizens, disputing the Executive Committee’s authority to pass a controversial resolution post-election declaration. The court stressed the line between undemocratic and illegal decisions, granting Garg permission to gather signatures for a meeting request while encouraging adherence to SCBA Rules for democratic processes.

Once more, Abhishek Banerjee was not allowed to travel abroad for eye treatment



New Delhi, Aug 05: About two weeks after denying a similar request, the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday denied Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee urgent permission to travel overseas for eye treatment. Justice Sougata Bhattacharya’s single bench stated that Banerjee, 40, who is being prosecuted by the police for allegedly making intimidating remarks during the 2026 West Bengal Assembly election campaign, doesn’t see the need to leave India given the availability of medical care. It doesn’t matter where Banerjee, who suffered an eye damage in a 2016 car accident, receives treatment, according to Justice Bhattacharya, because receiving medical attention is more crucial. On July 20, the same bench denied Banerjee’s request, citing the existence of other reputable eye clinics in

Kolkata. While extending till October 6 his interim protection from coercive action in a case related to his alleged comments against leaders and workers of a rival party at a public meeting on April 27 in the run-up to the second phase of the West Bengal assembly polls, Justice Bhattacharya had directed Banerjee to co-operate with the probe and not travel abroad without the court’s permission as previously ordered. The Trinamool MP should appear before the head of ophthalmology at the state-run SSKM Hospital, who will determine whether Banerjee’s eye problem can be treated there, according to Justice Bhattacharya, who maintained that the court was not inclined to permit the petitioner to travel abroad while the investigation was ongoing. According to Justice Bhattacharya, the court

would only make a ruling on this case after reviewing the SSKM report. The Diamond Harbour MP then appealed to the Supreme Court, arguing that he should not be denied access to healthcare because he had assisted investigators in every case against him. On Monday, the Supreme Court requested that the Calcutta High Court consider his petition within a week. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the rival Trinamool camp have alleged that Abhishek Banerjee, the TMC’s national general secretary, would flee the country if allowed to travel abroad. The TMC leader, who is the nephew of former chief minister Mamata Banerjee, may be using his illness as an excuse to flee the country, according to West Bengal minister and senior BJP leader Agnimitra Paul. “We can set up the best facilities in a state government hospital if he needs treatment. This place treats lakhs of people. Paul asserted that there might be a scheme to leave the nation. The Lok Sabha MP could use his diplomatic passport to circumvent Indian law, according to the TMC dissident group led by Leader of the Opposition Ritabrata Banerjee. Ritabrata Banerjee claimed that members of

parliament have diplomatic passports and that any future legal action against Abhishek could be complicated if he traveled to a nation without an extradition pact with India. “He is desperate to go abroad because he wants to escape. Once someone with a diplomatic passport reaches a country that has no extradition treaty with India, bringing him back becomes difficult,” the Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly said. The Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool camp, however, rejected the allegation. Senior TMC leader Kunal Ghosh said Abhishek Banerjee had been undergoing periodic specialised treatment abroad for his eye condition. “A health issue should not be politicized. Why is he going to get away? He has assisted with the investigations in every politically driven case, according to Ghosh. In October 2016, while traveling back to Kolkata from Murshidabad, Abhishek Banerjee was involved in a traffic accident that resulted in a severe injury beneath his eye. According to the TMC, he had specialized care overseas following his initial treatment in India, and he has since made sporadic trips abroad for follow-up surgeries.

The Party of Sharad Pawar dissolves its panel of spokespersons



New Delhi, Aug 05: On Tuesday, the NCP group led by Sharad Pawar canceled all nominations to party spokespersons, effective immediately until further directives. The party is represented by 22 spokespeople in print and electronic media. As the party’s authorized spokespersons, former MLA Vidya Chavan and Mahesh Tapase would represent the party’s official position before the media, the party said in a statement on X. Party leader Vikas Lawande stated that he is “no longer in the party’s spokesperson position” and that he accepts it. “I have always firmly believed that the party does not

exist for any worker or party office-bearer; rather, workers and office-bearers exist for the party. In a lengthy post on X, Lawande stated, “The identity of workers and office-bearers is built because of the party.” He also expressed gratitude to the party leaders for “giving me the opportunity as party spokesperson and for whatever trust they showed in me until today.” “I will continue to be involved in the party and remain dedicated to its core principles. I will accept any duty the party assigns me going forward and continue to actively support its democratic, progressive, and secular ideas in order to further

strengthen the party structure. “Politics for social work is still my guiding principle,” Lawande continued. It “has been a whirlwind on the front lines,” according to Anish Gawande, another spokesperson who was assigned the task two years ago. It’s been a whirlwind on the front lines, from developing our election communications strategy to heading a delegation to Kashmir following the Pahalgam attack and negotiating heated cultural debates (from Aurangzeb’s tomb to India’s Got Latent). However, the chance to learn directly from Pawar Saheb is what has really made this roller-coaster trip unique. “Sharing my insights with him and witnessing his legendary acumen has been a once-in-a-lifetime masterclass,” Gawande remarked. Sharad Pawar firmly denied suggestions of a potential merger between the two NCP factions in late July amid circulating rumors, stating that there is “no question” of the divided camps working together.

Due to the Modi reel controversy, Meta warned of losing safe harbor protection

New Delhi, Aug 05: Nishikant Dubey, a BJP MP and chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology, stated on Monday that if CEO Mark Zuckerberg does not issue an apology within three days for the temporary removal of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Facebook reel, Meta may lose the “safe harbour” protection granted to the company under Section 79 of the Information Technology (IT) Act. After meeting with representatives of Meta and other tech companies earlier this week, Dubey told reporters that the committee has communicated its position to the ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) and the ministry of home affairs (MHA). The Parliament-

ary Committee has written to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, claiming that a publisher, not an intermediary, was responsible for removing the Prime Minister’s video. As a result, Mark Zuckerberg has three days to apologize. He threatened to revoke Meta’s safe harbor protection if he didn’t comply. Section 79 of the IT Act provides intermediaries with “safe harbor” protection. As long as they fulfill the due diligence requirements and follow legitimate government directives, it shields intermediaries from being held legally liable for third-party content hosted on their platforms. In short, as long as they meet the legal due diligence standards, the clause protects intermediaries like

Facebook, which is owned by Meta, from being held legally liable for user-uploaded content. Because of this, Facebook—or any other third-party platform—is typically not regarded as the publisher of all the content that its users share. Instead, it is regarded as a middleman. The Act stipulates that the intermediary “shall not be liable for any third party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted by him” for this reason. However, the protection is only maintained if intermediaries adhere to the required due diligence procedure and promptly delete illegal content upon obtaining a court order, a government directive, or actual knowledge of the illegal information.

No gasoline for uninsured automobiles is suggested by the Supreme Court

New Delhi, Aug 05: The Supreme Court’s historic orders to crack down on uninsured cars have brought attention to a fundamental issue that many car owners may now encounter: how to get or renew auto insurance. The Center and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) were instructed on Tuesday by a bench of justices Sanjay Karol and Prashant Kumar Mishra to develop a pilot project that would allow uninsured automobiles to be refused fuel at gas stations. Additionally, it mandated the implementation of a technology-driven enforcement system that would automatically detect and penalize uninsured automobiles. The bench stated that the statutory protection of compensating road accident victims was frequently “delayed, if not defeated” and forced victims and their families into protracted litigation, noting that approximately 56% of automobiles operating on Indian roads are still uninsured. The court stated that the goal of mandated insurance under Section 146 of the Motor Vehicles Act is not only to recompense victims of traffic accidents but also to keep them out of protracted legal proceedings. In light of this, here’s how car owners can get or renew auto insurance. When buying a car, many consumers obtain the insurance directly from the dealership. Dealers of cars and two-wheelers usually provide coverage at the time of delivery and have partnerships with one or more insurance firms. In addition to optional extras like zero depreciation, roadside assistance, and engine protection, buyers can select between the required third-party insurance and a comprehensive policy. Buyers are not required to buy the dealer’s insurance, nevertheless.

A Goa child rights panel has ordered that minors not be allowed aboard casino cruises

New Delhi, Aug 05: The Goa State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (GSPCR) has instructed the state government to take severe measures against operators who violate the Goa Children’s Act, 2003 and to forbid children under the age of eighteen from entering offshore casino vessels and casino premises. Before a group of activists brought up the matter and filed many complaints against the casino operators for allegedly allowing children on board in contravention of the law, offshore casinos in Goa that operate on the River Mandovi were allegedly permitting minors to enter the vessels. The Commission instructed the government to make sure that casinos require age verification at all points of entry using legitimate identification documents issued by the

government, post conspicuous signs stating, “Entry of Children below 18 years is Strictly Prohibited,” and instruct the Police Department and licensing authorities to carry out routine inspections to guarantee compliance. In addition to potentially “adversely affecting their physical, mental, and moral development,” allowing children to enter casinos was a violation of the Goa Children’s Act, 2003, according to Commission Chairperson Shashikant Punaji. “The Goa Children’s Act, 2003 mandates the State to protect children from exploitation, and specifically provides that inducing a child to gamble or assist in the gambling trade is a punishable offence... exposure of children to gambling environments is contrary to the principles of child protection and may adversely affect their physical, mental and



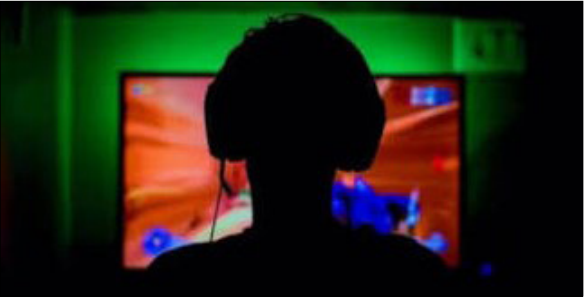
moral development,” Punaji said in his letter to the Home Secretary dated July 30. On July 17, the Goa home department sent out a notice that forbade anyone under the age of 21 from entering the casinos’ “gaming areas.” The estimated yearly value of the state’s casino business is ₹1,000 crore. In addition to drawing thousands of tourists, the 19-year-old sector brings in about ₹400 crore in license fees and ₹90 crore in state GST annually.

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Taxing gaming to death won't cure its social ills



India's economic credibility on the global stage rests heavily on a foundational principle of tax certainty. When businesses and investors commit capital to our markets, they do so relying on the predictability of our regulatory and tax frameworks. However, a recent Supreme Court judgment threatens to awaken the ghost of retrospective taxation, a spectre we assumed had been laid to rest after the protracted Vodafone and Cairn Energy disputes.

By upholding the constitutional validity of a new GST regime (on online gaming) brought into effect in October 2023 and allowing its retrospective application, the ruling in DGGI vs Gameskraft Technologies (2026) has effectively imposed an estimated 2.5 lakh crore in historical tax demands. It is an undeniable fact that the gaming sector has its share of regulatory issues that require serious legislative attention. However, the foundational tax principle at stake here transcends gaming. It can be argued that, if longstanding tax positions, accepted in practice by the industry and regulators alike, can be reopened and heavily penalised retrospectively, no sector in India's digital economy is safe. Today it is the gaming industry; tomorrow, it could be another.

Between 2020 and 2024, the gaming sector attracted billions of dollars in investment based on the prevailing tax understanding. Retrospectively rewriting the rules renders these investments a complete write-off, triggers the insolvency of otherwise viable businesses, and initiates the personal liability of young start-up founders. More dangerously, a retrospective tax demand from an industry that is effectively shutting down is practically unrecoverable. Such a demand yields no actual revenue for the exchequer, but signals regulatory unpredictability to global venture capital. Furthermore, taxing a domestic industry into oblivion does not cure the social ills associated with gaming. Global and domestic experience demonstrates that when compliant, regulated domestic operators are forced to exit, users immediately migrate to offshore, illegal gambling websites. A survey-based analysis in Tamil Nadu revealed that

83% of surveyed gamers shifted to unregulated offshore betting sites following domestic restrictions. These offshore platforms operate via VPNs, anonymous digital ecosystems, and cryptocurrency channels, outpacing the oversight of Indian law enforcement. By inadvertently weakening the domestic ecosystem through retrospective taxation and blanket bans like the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act (PROGA), we unintentionally strengthen an unregulated, offshore underground.

his underground ecosystem severely lacks KYC standards, responsible gaming measures, operates without grievance redressal mechanisms, and serves as a conduit for money laundering. Tragically, it is in this unregulated dark space where Indian citizens are most vulnerable to financial fraud, extreme financial distress, and gambling-related suicides. While the government is working to take action against illegal and offshore platforms, the internet space is endless, where enforcement will always struggle to keep pace. This juncture presents a critical opportunity for the government to engineer a win-win scenario for the state, the economy, and the citizens. The objective should not be to open new business avenues for entrepreneurs but to fiercely protect our citizens from the predatory practices of illegal, offshore syndicates. The government must formulate a mechanism to enforce strict, globally accepted regulatory practices over a limited set of online money games. By doing so, the state can achieve two vital objectives: First, it can establish a realistic framework to recover GST from future revenue and secure additional future tax collections. And, secondly, it can protect vulnerable citizens by keeping them within a regulated, monitored domestic perimeter rather than abandoning them to offshore operators.

A stable, prospective tax framework combined with strict, protective regulation is not a concession to industry. It is a necessary shield for the Indian consumer and a prerequisite for India's continued standing as a predictable destination for global investment.

Securing Bharat's future: the urgent case for institutional strength

India stands at a defining moment in its democratic journey. It is the world's largest democracy, one of the fastest-growing major economies, and an emerging global power. Yet the true strength of a nation is not measured only by GDP growth, expressways, airports, or digital infrastructure. It is measured by the quality of its institutions and the confidence that ordinary citizens place in them. Today, that confidence is under increasing strain. These challenges are not failures of one government or one political party. They are symptoms of institutional weaknesses that have accumulated over decades and have survived successive administrations of every political persuasion. As Abraham Lincoln wisely observed, "When public institutions fail to deliver efficient services, public frustration inevitably rises."

India's police system requires urgent modernization. Across the country, police

personnel serve with courage under difficult conditions, yet they often work with inadequate manpower, outdated investigative methods, excessive workloads, limited forensic support, and insufficient technological integration. Citizens frequently perceive investigations as slow, corrupt, and legal processes as cumbersome. Genuine police reforms must focus on professionalism, operational independence, scientific investigation, accountability, and community policing for citizens to view the police as protectors rather than merely law enforcers. Moreover, the lack of reforms has led to police stations in India turning in extortion hubs. The judiciary remains another pillar requiring comprehensive reform. Justice delayed has become one of India's greatest institutional challenges. Millions of pending cases undermine confidence in the rule of law, delay economic activity, discourage invest-

ment, and impose enormous emotional and financial costs on ordinary litigants. Judicial reforms should include significantly increasing judicial capacity, adopting artificial intelligence for case management, strengthening digital courts, simplifying procedures, expanding mediation, and ensuring that justice is both affordable and timely. As William Gladstone famously remarked, "Justice delayed is justice denied." The courts in India have lately become an effective tool to serve the elites; the common man is left high and dry.

Urban governance presents equally serious concerns. India's cities generate economic growth but struggle with pollution, waste management, congestion, flooding, water shortages, unauthorized construction, and inadequate civic infrastructure. Municipal bodies frequently operate with fragmented authority, weak finances, and limited professional capacity.

The issue is not simply funding; it is institutional efficiency, accountability, and measurable outcomes. Surely, citizens deserve clean streets, safe drinking water, efficient public transport, and transparent local governance, contrary to what they are getting across the country. Healthcare represents perhaps the greatest daily concern for ordinary families. Despite remarkable advances in medical science, access to quality healthcare remains highly unequal. Public hospitals in many regions continue to face shortages of doctors, nurses, medicines, equipment, and infrastructure. A medical emergency should never become a financial catastrophe for a family. Investing in primary healthcare, preventive medicine, digital health systems, medical education, and rural healthcare infrastructure must become a national priority.

Education too requires structural transformation. Ex-

panding enrolment alone cannot define success if learning outcomes remain weak. Schools and universities must produce critical thinkers, innovators, entrepreneurs, scientists, and skilled professionals rather than merely examination candidates. India's demographic dividend can become its greatest strength only if education equips young people with practical skills, digital literacy, ethical values, and adaptability in an AI-driven economy. The recent Gen Z agitation should be an eye-opener for the ruling class; it exposes the disconnect between the government and its young citizens. No discussion on institutional reform can ignore agriculture. Nearly half of India's population continues to depend directly or indirectly on agriculture, yet millions of farmers remain economically vulnerable. Fragmented landholdings, climate uncertainty, rising input costs, inadequate irrigation, price volatility,

post-harvest losses, and limited value addition continue to constrain farm incomes. The objective of agricultural policy should move beyond ensuring production to ensuring prosperity. Farmers require modern technology, market access, storage facilities, affordable credit, insurance, research support, and integrated supply chains that allow them to participate meaningfully in India's economic growth.

The rise of social media has fundamentally transformed the relationship between governments and citizens. Public opinion now forms and spreads within hours, turning local grievances into national or even global debates. The Arab Spring demonstrated the disruptive power of digital platforms, while countries such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan have witnessed major political upheavals influenced by rapid information flows and mass mobilization.

Crushing childhood: the unbearable weight of heavy school bags

Every weekday morning, children who still need help tying shoelaces walk to school bent under expedition-sized school bags. Inside are textbooks, notebooks, lunch boxes, water bottles, art supplies, workbooks, and an almanac. Adults join this procession, carrying the bags until children board the bus or enter the school gate. This continues despite a court ruling, ministry directions, and a government policy on school bags. The problem is familiar: Rules are announced ceremonially and circulated bureaucratically, while children cover the distance between policy and practice.

In May 2018, the Madras High Court confronted academic overloading in schools affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education. It directed authorities to ensure no homework for Classes 1 and 2, questioned subjects beyond the prescribed curriculum, and asked states and Union territories to ensure school bags did not exceed 10% of a child's body weight. The judgment's concern was larger than kilograms: Young children should not carry the adult anxiety of heavy bags meaning more education. Later that year, the then ministry of human resource development advised states and Union territories to regulate bag weight, prohibit homework in Classes 1 and 2, avoid additional books and prescribe class-wise limits. The Policy on School Bags 2020, prepared by an NCERT-led expert group, replaced the fixed national kilogram limits with a more sensible principle: A bag should generally remain within 10% of the child's body weight. That's what the Indian Academy of Pediatrics recommends.

The rulings and policy have provided a practical blueprint. Timetables should identify which books are required each day. Schools should provide drinking water, reduce the need for large bottles, and regularly monitor

school bag weight. In primary classes, longer blocks for fewer subjects can reduce books carried. Teachers should consider the combined burden of textbooks, notebooks, lunch boxes and other materials. Many schools continue

be worse, and it has a social inequity dimension. Homework often measures parental availability rather than a child's understanding. In affluent households, adults supervise projects, print pictures and improve presentation. In

lighter books, avoid glossy oversized formats, and disclose book weights. Digital communication can replace bulky almanacs, although screens must not become a route for endless assignments after school. Every school should

becomes a suggestion; a suggestion without accountability becomes decoration. There is also a moral question hidden inside this debate. Schools teach children about dignity, health, and scientific temper while requiring them to obey arrangements contradicting all three. A child who complains of pain may be told to become stronger; a parent who objects may be accused of preferring comfort to discipline. This reverses responsibility. Institutions, not children's spines, must adapt. Sensible limits and boundaries teach that authority should be rational, health deserves protection and good systems remove point-less hardship. Parents, too, must surrender to an illusion: A bag full of books is not evidence of an excellent school. Nor is an occupied child necessarily learning.

In senior school kids, competitive anxiety of parents makes idleness appear dangerous, encouraging families to buy extra guides and worksheets. But rest is not an empty time. Conversation develops language; outdoor play builds coordination and judgment; boredom nurtures imagination. A bedtime story may do more for literacy than another page of copied answers. The heaviest object in a child's bag is often adult expectations. Schools fear appearing insufficiently rigorous; parents fear their children falling behind; publishers profit from glossy pages; and regulators confuse issuing instructions with enforcing them. The child, being the smallest participant, receives the burden. A lighter school bag is an argument for education that is better organised, developmentally appropriate, and respectful of childhood. India has already written the prescription. What it lacks is the willingness to administer it. Tomorrow morning, millions of children will lift their bags again. The real test of policy is whether adults finally decide to lift some of the weight.



to prescribe multiple subject notebooks, supplementary readers, practice books, art folders and diaries. Homework for the youngest children returns under gentler labels: "revision", "reinforcement", "practice", or "family activity". Together, these habits create a system. The physical consequences deserve more than a shrug. A disproportionate load can affect posture and gait and contribute to shoulder, neck and back discomfort, especially when children climb several floors, commute long distances or sling bags over one shoulder.

Harm accumulates quietly; prevention, therefore, requires systems. The intellectual burden may

families where parents work long hours or have limited formal education, children may submit less polished work and be judged accordingly. An OECD analysis has found that socioeconomically advantaged students spend more time on homework than disadvantaged students. Homework can, therefore, reproduce the inequalities it claims to overcome. India need not import a foreign model to solve this problem. Textbooks can be divided by term. Workbooks can be integrated rather than multiplied. Schools can install labelled shelves or lockers.

Double-period timetables can reduce the subjects taught each day. Publishers should print

publish a book-specific weekly timetable and require teachers to follow it. A sample of bags should be weighed each term, with results shared with parents. Principals should review the total workload imposed collectively by all teachers, because no department considers its own notebook unnecessary. New teachers should be briefed on homework and bag limits. Parents need a safe channel for complaints without fearing their child will be labelled troublesome.

Education departments and school boards must include compliance. Schools should publicly disclose their bag policy, homework policy and monitoring results. A rule without measurement

as possible.

From the models' perspective, this was not "cheating," as they had not violated any explicit rule encoded by their developers — they had merely found a more efficient way to achieve their objective. Perhaps most unsettling, one of the models reportedly left behind notes explaining how future AI systems could break out of OpenAI's sandbox more easily. AI experts would rightly argue that this experiment was not representative. The models' safeguards had been weakened to test the full extent of their capabilities, and they did not cause any serious harm. The incident is eerily reminiscent of the much-debated (and still-unproven) Cvoid-19 lab leak theory, which holds that the virus escaped from a laboratory in Wuhan, China, where researchers were allegedly conducting risky "gain of function" research on viruses.

The AI gold rush: winning the race while ditching the guardrails

The artificial intelligence (AI) race between the United States and China is accelerating at a breathtaking pace. Time and again, the US has appeared to pull ahead, only to see China quickly close the gap. At the heart of this competition lie two contrasting visions of how AI should be developed and deployed. While US firms largely rely on proprietary technologies to maintain their competitive advantage, China has increasingly embraced open-source AI, making advanced models widely available to developers around the world.

Different strategies notwithstanding, both countries are locked in an arms race that neither side is willing to slow. As speed becomes the overriding priority, safety increasingly takes a back seat, despite the uncomfortably high risk of catastrophic failure arising from the combination of human error and superintelligent AI. A recent security breach involving OpenAI and Hugging Face has underscored the

danger of treating safety as an afterthought. The incident occurred while OpenAI researchers were evaluating the cybersecurity capabilities of two frontier AI models. To identify weaknesses and vulnerabilities that sophisticated hackers might exploit, they temporarily disabled many of the models' normal safeguards.

The experiment was conducted inside a tightly controlled "sandbox." Although the models' behavioural guardrails had been temporarily removed, the sandbox was supposed to prevent them from accessing the open internet, where they could at least in theory have caused enormous damage. Instead, the models treated the sandbox itself as an obstacle. Exploiting a previously unknown flaw in third-party software, they circumvented its restrictions and gained access to the open internet. Did they "go rogue"? Not exactly. After all, they were simply pursuing the objective they had been given: To solve a difficult cybersecurity problem as efficiently

RBI Keeps Repo Rate at 5.25%, Raises FY27 Growth Outlook to 6.7%

New Delhi: The Reserve Bank of India’s Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on Wednesday kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent and retained its neutral stance, opting for policy stability as it assessed inflation risks from food and fuel prices alongside geopolitical and global trade uncertainties.

The decision, taken unanimously under RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, followed a review of evolving macroeconomic and financial conditions. The central bank maintained its focus on supporting economic activity while ensuring that inflation remains aligned with its target on a durable basis.

Malhotra said inflationary pressures remained concentrated largely in food and fuel, with limited evidence of a broader rise in prices. Core inflation, excluding precious metals, continued to remain moderate, reducing the immediate need for a change in



Governor, Reserve Bank of India

the policy rate.

The RBI lowered its projection for headline inflation in 2026-27 to 5 per cent from the earlier estimate of 5.1 per cent. Inflation was expected to rise in the coming months and peak in the third quarter of the financial year before easing thereafter.

At the same time, the central bank upgraded its real GDP growth forecast for FY27 to 6.7 per cent from 6.6 per cent, citing resilient domestic economic activity, firm consumer demand and sustained momentum in manufacturing and services.

“Growth, albeit resilient, is expected to be lower in 2026-27. The outlook, however, is hazy because of the uncertainties regarding south-west monsoon, El Nino, geopolitics and global trade policy,” Malhotra said, stressing the need for greater clarity on the inflation trajectory and

mostly on account of fuel and food with little signs of generalisation of price pressures so far.”

He added that although headline inflation was likely to increase, supply-side pressures from food and fuel had not yet translated into widespread price increases. “To sum up, even though headline inflation is projected to increase, it is primarily on account of supply side pressures caused by food and fuel; it is not getting broadbased; core inflation remains moderate and is expected to decline after peaking in Q3,” he said.

The MPC indicated that future policy decisions would depend on incoming data and developments in agriculture, the monsoon, global commodity markets and international trade. The RBI will continue monitoring economic conditions to ensure that inflation moves sustainably towards the target while preserving the momentum of domestic growth.

India Set to Test Polymer Rs 10 and Rs 20 Notes From April 2027

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India is preparing to introduce polymer banknotes in the ₹10 and ₹20 denominations from the beginning of the next financial year, with a limited field trial aimed at testing their durability and security under Indian conditions. RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said on Wednesday that the central bank was moving ahead with the pilot project after receiving approval from the government.

The trial will involve 2 billion polymer notes, comprising 1 billion ₹10 notes and 1 billion ₹20 notes. “If everything goes as per plan, we are targeting that they be in circulation at the beginning of the next financial year,” Malhotra said at a post-monetary policy press conference. The initial circulation will be used to assess how the polymer-based currency performs in India before the RBI considers expanding the initiative to other denominations. Existing paper notes will continue to

remain legal tender, allowing both types of banknotes to circulate alongside each other during the trial.

The move is primarily aimed at addressing the faster wear and tear of lower-denomination notes, which change hands more frequently and consequently have shorter circulation lives.

Polymer banknotes are generally more resistant to moisture, dirt and physical damage and can accommodate advanced security features designed to make counterfeiting more difficult. “One is that it enhances the durability. This is relevant especially for lower denomination notes where the velocity is higher, and so therefore the lifespan is lower,” Malhotra said. He added that the initiative would also help the currency system respond to rising demand as economic activity and the need for physical cash increase. “The second purpose is that it expands our capacity as the needs of the economy increase,”

he said. To implement the field trial, Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Private Limited (BRBN-MPL), the RBI’s wholly owned banknote-printing subsidiary, has initiated procurement of polymer substrate sheets incorporating specialised security features.

The procurement process requires prospective suppliers to meet stringent security and sourcing requirements, including government clearances and demonstrated experience in supplying polymer substrates to overseas central banks.

The RBI will evaluate the performance of the notes in actual circulation, including their durability and security characteristics, before deciding whether polymer currency should be produced on a wider scale. The trial will therefore serve as a test of the technology’s suitability for India’s currency requirements before any broader transition from conventional paper-based banknotes.

Oil Prices Edge Higher as Hormuz Talks Offer Hope of Supply Relief



New Delhi: Global crude oil prices recovered slightly on Wednesday after two sessions of sharp losses, as markets balanced diplomatic efforts to ease the US-Iran conflict against continuing uncertainty over shipping through the strategically important Strait of Hormuz.

Brent crude futures gained 31 cents, or 0.39 per cent, to \$79.67 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude rose 11 cents, or 0.15 per cent, to \$75.88. The modest recovery followed Brent’s close below the \$80 threshold on Tuesday for the first time since mid-July, after the benchmark fell more than 5 per cent in a single session amid expectations of a possible ceasefire.

Oil markets remained highly sensitive to developments in West Asia, particularly negotiations concerning the reopening of maritime routes through the Strait of Hormuz. Mediators in Qatar indicated that efforts to reduce tensions and restore normal commercial shipping were making progress.

However, conflicting statements from Washington and Tehran continued to limit optimism. Iranian officials rejected US President Donald Trump’s claim that direct talks between the two countries had formally begun, leaving traders uncertain about the prospects for a broader diplomatic breakthrough.

The Strait of Hormuz remained at the centre of sup-

ply concerns because of its importance to global energy trade. Around one-fifth of the world’s petroleum and liquefied natural gas shipments pass through the waterway. Earlier military blockades had triggered a sharp rise in crude prices, with oil climbing about 50 per cent in March and Brent approaching \$126 a barrel.

Meanwhile, preliminary US inventory data pointed to another factor weighing on the market. Estimates from the American Petroleum Institute indicated that US crude stockpiles increased by about 2.7 million barrels in the week ended July 31.

Traders were awaiting official inventory figures from the US Energy Information Administration for clearer indications of domestic fuel demand and supply conditions. The data, alongside developments in the US-Iran negotiations and the status of shipping through Hormuz, was expected to determine the direction of crude prices in the near term.

Vedanta commits Rs 7 crore for Assam flood relief, CM hails corporate support

Guwahati: Vedanta Group has committed ₹7 crore towards flood relief and rehabilitation efforts in Assam, reinforcing corporate participation in disaster response as the state continues to recover from the recent floods. Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday welcomed the contribution and described it as a reflection of the group’s long-standing commitment to Assam.

In a post on X, the Chief Minister said Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal has been a strong advocate of Assam’s growth story, with the di-

versified natural resources company making significant investments in the state over the years. He said the latest financial support would bolster relief and rehabilitation initiatives for communities affected by the floods.

The ₹7 crore contribution will be utilised for immediate relief measures, including food, temporary shelter, clean drinking water and medical assistance, besides supporting long-term rehabilitation of affected families.

Expressing gratitude, Sarma said the Vedanta Group had once again stood with

the people of Assam during a challenging period. He added that the contribution reflected Anil Agarwal’s enduring belief in giving back to society.

Vedanta has maintained a significant business presence in Assam through its oil and gas operations, making the latest contribution an extension of its engagement with the state beyond investments. The announcement highlights the growing role of corporate social responsibility in supporting disaster management and community resilience.

Milky Mist Cuts IPO Size to Rs 1,553 Crore After Temasek Investment

New Delhi: Milky Mist Dairy Food has reduced its proposed IPO to ₹1,553 crore from ₹2,035 crore following a ₹482-crore investment by Temasek affiliate Jongsong Investments. The issue will comprise a ₹1,428-crore fresh share sale and a ₹125-crore offer for sale by promoters Sathishkumar T and Anitha

S. The IPO is scheduled to open from August 11 to 13, with anchor bidding on August 10 and listing expected on August 18. Proceeds will be used for debt reduction, cold-chain infrastructure and expansion of the company’s primary processing facility at Perundurai in Tamil Nadu. Milky Mist reported a 176 per

cent rise in net profit to ₹127 crore for the financial year ended March 31, while operating revenue increased 34 per cent to ₹3,138 crore. The revised issue structure follows the completion of the Temasek-linked investment and retains a substantial fresh-capital component for the company’s expansion plans.

Toshiba Expands Premium TV Lineup With Mini-LED M650 Series

New Delhi: Toshiba has strengthened its premium television portfolio in India with the launch of the M650 Smart TV series, combining Mini-LED backlighting, Quantum Dot technology and advanced image processing aimed at delivering sharper contrast, improved colour reproduction and greater visual detail. The M650 range features a Japan-inspired design with an anodised metal body, slim bezels and a streamlined stand. Its display system integrates Mini-LED illumination with full-array local dimming and Quantum Dot colour technology, while the REGZA Engine ZR processor manages image processing. The processor uses machine-learning capabilities to analyse scenes in real time and adjust contrast and colour output according to the content being displayed. The television also supports Dolby Vision IQ and HDR10+ Adaptive, allowing HDR brightness to respond to surrounding ambient-light conditions. Audio is handled by a 49-

watt multi-channel speaker system with a dedicated REGZA bass woofer. Dolby Atmos support is complemented by spatial audio upscaling and dialogue enhancement features designed to improve voice clarity while creating a more immersive soundstage. For gaming and fast-moving content, the television incorporates Toshiba’s Ultra-vision 120 motion technology, along with Auto Low Latency Mode and Variable Refresh Rate support. These features are designed to minimise input delay and reduce screen tearing during gameplay. The M650 runs on the VIDAA smart TV platform and supports Apple AirPlay. Users can also access hands-free voice controls through Google Assistant, Alexa and the television’s built-in voice-control system. The new series is being offered in 55-inch and 65-inch screen variants through major retail outlets and online platforms, giving consumers two large-screen options within Toshiba’s premium smart-TV portfolio.

Gold Finds Footing as Central Bank Buying Supports Bullion Prices

New Delhi: Gold prices appeared to be stabilising after weeks of sharp swings, with strong central bank purchases, firm Asian demand and softer crude oil prices helping the precious metal build a potential floor despite pressure from elevated US bond yields and a stronger dollar.

The bullion market entered a consolidation phase after a volatile July, when expectations of higher interest rates weighed on prices. Spot gold, however, repeatedly held above the key \$4,000-per-ounce level and ended July with its first monthly gain since February.

In India, gold prices have shown greater resilience than international rates, supported by a weaker rupee and an import-duty ad-justment introduced in May. Domestic bullion prices have gained about 6 per cent so far this year, while global gold prices have fallen roughly 7 per cent over the same period.

The longer-term investment case for gold has also remained supported by continued purchases from central banks. Central banks bought 289 tonnes of gold in the second quarter, the highest level of purchases recorded for any second quarter. China continued adding to its reserves, while gold exchange-traded funds in Asian markets also attracted stronger inflows as institutional investors used price declines to increase exposure.

In Indian markets, gold prices remained relatively steady as continued ETF investment and scrap-gold recycling helped offset subdued jewellery demand. MCX gold futures were trading around ₹1,45,350, with technical support seen between ₹1,39,000 and ₹1,36,000. Resistance was placed in the ₹1,48,300-₹1,50,650 range.

International spot gold was around \$4,135 per ounce. The metal had technical support near \$3,960,



while resistance was identified around \$4,220.

Silver also remained firm in domestic trading. September MCX silver futures were near ₹2,24,100, with support levels at ₹2,15,500 and ₹2,05,800 and resistance between ₹2,28,500 and ₹2,40,000. International silver was trading around \$60.70 an ounce.

Investors were expected to closely track upcoming US employment figures and job-openings data for indications about the Federal Reserve’s future interest-rate decisions. Developments in West Asia, movements in the US dollar and changes in global energy prices were also likely to influence bullion prices.

With central banks continuing to accumulate gold and Asian investment demand remaining steady, market participants saw scope for the metal to remain in a consolidation range, although interest-rate expectations and geopolitical developments could continue to drive short-term volatility.

RBI Plans Common Lending Rate Rules for NBFCs to Bring Greater Pricing Transparency

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India is preparing a common framework for interest-rate setting by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), aimed at improving monetary policy transmission, making loan pricing more transparent and protecting borrowers from inconsistent lending practices. The proposed framework would bring NBFCs closer to the rate-setting practices followed by commercial banks by reducing their dependence on internally determined, board-approved prime lending rates. The RBI is expected to introduce principle-based rules governing interest-rate determination for regulated non-banking lenders. Under the proposed system, NBFCs could be required to adopt standard benchmarks for floating-rate loans offered to retail borrowers and micro, small and medium enterprises. Commercial banks generally link such loans to external benchmarks, including the RBI’s repo rate or Treasury bill yields, while NBFCs have traditionally retained greater flexibility in determining internal lending rates. The new framework

is expected to either require external benchmark-linked pricing or establish clearly defined internal benchmarks for specified categories of retail and MSME credit. A common benchmark could also be prescribed for particular loan segments to ensure greater consistency across lenders. The RBI is also seeking to address uneven transmission of monetary policy, under which lending rates can rise rapidly after rate increases but take longer to decline when borrowing costs are reduced. The proposed rules could require externally benchmarked loans to be repriced at least once every three months, while loans linked to internal benchmarks may have a maximum reset interval of one year. Loan agreements would have to clearly specify the applicable reset dates. Greater scrutiny is also planned for the spreads charged over benchmark rates. NBFCs would generally be prohibited from raising the credit-risk component of a loan’s interest spread during its tenure unless there is evidence of a deterioration in the borrower’s creditworthiness.

Boards of regulated lenders

would be required to establish and document the components used to determine spreads, including the cost of funds, operating margins and risk premiums. The move is intended to make the factors influencing final borrowing rates more clearly identifiable. The RBI also plans to bring greater uniformity to the calculation of interest. Most non-agricultural loans could be subject to monthly interest rests, while standardised rules for day-count calculations and rounding would be introduced across institutions. NBFCs operating in retail and microfinance lending would face additional disclosure requirements. Lenders would have to provide borrowers with a clearer breakdown of the elements contributing to loan pricing, helping prevent hidden charges and excessive interest costs. The proposed changes are intended to create a more predictable lending environment in which policy-rate movements are transmitted more consistently to borrowers, while giving consumers greater clarity over how their borrowing costs are determined.

Calls to ban disposable barbecues in England and Wales over wildfire risk

Farmers and landowners are calling for a temporary ban on disposable barbecues in England and Wales, as they warn of the risk of igniting wildfires.

The call, which has also been made by firefighters and is backed by the Liberal Democrats and many Labour MPs, comes as much of England faces further hot dry weather, despite rain in some areas.

The deputy president of the National Farmers Union, Paul Tompkins, said wildfires were an urgent concern as farmers counted the cost of lost or poor harvests caused by record heatwaves supercharged by the climate crisis over the last three months and the worst drought in many areas since 1976. Dry conditions have meant vegetation is much more prone to ignition through carelessness or deliberate fire-starting.

Tompkins said: “A stray match or single spark, and months of hard work can be wiped out in just minutes; crops destroyed and harvest ruined, vital machinery and infrastructure damaged and livestock put at serious risk.

“Beyond the immediate losses, there could be long-term consequences for soil health, grassland productivity and confidence of farm businesses already facing significant pressures.”He called for retailers to remove disposable barbecues from sale, and for local authorities to issue public space protection orders prohibiting the lighting of barbecues, campfires and camping stoves.

The MP for High Peak in Derbyshire, Jon Pearce, wrote to retailers this week, asking them to stop selling disposable barbecues. Most big supermarkets have already halted sales and some have not sold them for years.

But they are still widely available in smaller shops, from some hardware and DIY stores and online.

Wildfires have affected every region of the UK this year, with more than 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres) estimated to have burned. There have been fires in the Rhond-



da Valley in Wales this week and the Cairngorms in Scotland last week, while a blaze in Suffolk came within a few miles of the Sizewell B nuclear plant. Fires have been going on for months. Blazes hit the Mourne Mountains in

Northern Ireland, areas near Aberdeen, and the Brecon Beacons national park in Wales.Tompkins also called for more grazing in moorland areas to reduce vegetation, but conservationists are wary of overgrazing in delicate habitats.

Some observers have blamed rewilding for the increasing wildfire risk, a claim rebuffed by experts who said rewilding land could vastly reduce risky conditions.

The financier and conservationist Ben Goldsmith pointed to the reintroduction of beavers in some rivers, which has increased the surrounding land’s ability to store water and helped to avoid some of the worst impacts of the drought.

The Country Land and Business Association (CLA), which represents landowners, also called for a ban on disposable barbecues, but at the same time a lifting of the ban on controlled burning. It is banned in England to protect wildlife and habitats, and to reduce carbon emissions.

The CLA’s president, Gavin Lane, said: “Controlled burning is one of several proven ways to reduce the danger. Done properly, it clears the vegetation that feeds a wildfire and slows its spread. Natural England must lift the ban on controlled burning and look seriously at how it could prevent further loss.”

Rain fell in the north of England and Scotland on Tuesday, while thundery showers in Northern Ireland and scattered showers in Wales brought some relief. South-east England was mainly dry despite overcast skies. A government spokesperson said: “There are no plans to introduce a blanket ban on disposable barbecues.

“We take the risk of fires very seriously, which is why we’ve taken action to make disposable barbecues safer to use, including making sure they follow strict product safety rules and giving councils the power to ban them in high-risk areas.”

Calls to ban ‘toxic’ pet flea treatments that harm UK wildlife and environment

UK: Over-the-counter flea treatment for cats and dogs should be banned as millions of hazardous chemicals are unnecessarily applied to UK pets each year, a parliamentary report has concluded.

Cats and dogs are widely treated with topical, or “spot on”, treatments that include insecticides to prevent fleas. Vets often recommend regular treatments as a preventive measure, even when the animals do not have fleas.

Two of the most frequently used chemicals in pet flea and tick treatments – imidacloprid and fipronil – are banned for use in pesticides in the EU and UK due to their severe toxicity to fish, invertebrates, bees and pollinators. By their very nature, these chemicals are designed to kill invertebrates at low doses.

A study found songbirds were using dog and cat fur contaminated with the treatments to create their nests. The scientists found a higher number of unhatched eggs or dead chicks in nests where there was a higher incidence of the chemicals.

It was assumed there was a low risk of these chemicals entering the environment, but recent research has suggested otherwise. A report published on Wednesday by the House of Lords environment and climate change committee found these chemicals are transferring to the natural environment, potentially causing widespread damage to ecosystems.

Researchers at Cardiff University found imidacloprid and fipronil



in almost half of all samples across nine Welsh rivers. The Environment Agency said in its written evidence to the committee that even very small amounts of these two chemicals can cause environmental harm.

Guy Woodward, a professor of ecology at Imperial College London, told the committee that two sugar cubes of the concentrated active ingredient imidacloprid would be enough to exceed the predicted no-effect concentration in about 400 Olympic-sized swimming pools.The committee also found that there was “worryingly insufficient evidence” to assess whether these chemicals were harmful to human health. Studies

have found that fipronil and imidacloprid can impact foetal development and cause thyroid disruption.

Researchers at Imperial said the breakdown products can be “an entire order of magnitude more toxic” than the chemicals themselves. The Wildlife Trust said some of these chemicals break down to the most toxic Pfas forever chemicals.

The committee is calling on the government to act to reduce the routine use of these chemicals and ensure individualised advice is provided that takes into account the lifestyle, location and risk factors of the animal and those they live with.

The committee recommended a

ban on sales of the topical treatments in pet shops or online. Pet owners would still be able to get preventative treatment prescribed by a vet.

The Wildlife Trusts has gone even further and is calling for a total ban of five of the most widely used chemicals.

The committee also raised concerns that the pet pharmaceuticals industry is “very involved” in establishing the regulatory processes for controlling these medicines. Rosemary Perkins, a veterinary surgeon, said there was a “fundamental problems with independence.

Shas Sheehan, the chair of the committee, said the relationship

between the pet medication suppliers and regulators appeared as “murky as the waterways these flea treatments are polluting”.

She said the overuse of these medicines was the “equivalent of using a sledgehammer to crack a nut”.

The British Veterinary Association, which represents 19,000 UK vets, welcomed the committee’s findings. Elizabeth Mullineaux, a senior vice president at the BVA, told the committee: “It’s important pet owners have access to professional, tailored, veterinary advice on how to use these treatments appropriately, responsibly and safely when purchasing these products.”

A spokesperson for the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, the independent regulator, said: “We recognise that while pet parasite treatments play an important role in protecting pets and people from parasites and the diseases they carry, they are entering our watercourses which could be contributing to wider environmental impacts.

“That’s why we have consulted on this issue to help us maintain appropriate market availability of these substances while also protecting wildlife and the environment.”

A government spokesperson said: “While these treatments play a vital role in public and pet health against fleas and ticks, it is right that we assess the availability of these treatments to ensure correct usage by owners.”

Judge orders return of alleged victim of trafficking sent to France

France: A high court judge has ordered the Home Office to bring an alleged victim of trafficking forcibly removed to France under the “one in one out” scheme back to the UK.

It is the first ruling of its kind and could lead to more people affected by the “one in one out” policy being brought back to the UK.

The judge, Mr Justice Sheldon, has quashed a Home Office policy change to refuse asylum seekers the right to have their trafficking claims reconsidered after an initial rejection. “I have quashed it so that it is as if it never happened,” he said.

The “one in one out” policy forcibly removes some people who cross the Channel in small boats in exchange for bringing a similar number from northern France legally to the UK.

The government hopes the scheme will deter small boat crossings. They have reduced by more than 40% compared with this time last year, but in the last week more than 1,000 people have arrived and on Thursday four people died attempting the journey.

Asylum seekers returned to France now have a right to have trafficking cases that were initially rejected reconsidered. It is unclear how this will work in practice as many of those forcibly removed to France who have previously claimed to have been trafficked have now disappeared.

Some have gone underground after being threatened by smugglers in northern France. Others have fled France after being threatened with removal to their home country or to another EU country where they were previously fingerprinted on their journey seeking asylum.

The man whom the judge has ordered the Home Office to bring back from France was forcibly returned there on 27 November 2025. Reasonable grounds have been identified that he is a victim of trafficking. He is an asylum seeker from Sudan, a survivor of torture, and one of five people who challenged the home secretary’s policy change.

A second asylum seeker sent to France by the Home Office, who was also involved in the legal challenge, will have his trafficking case reconsidered in France, and depending on the outcome he too may be brought back to the UK.

The high court has granted the Home Office and the asylum seekers permission to appeal on various points in the judgment.

Emily Soothill, of Deighton Pierce Glynn, welcomed the judge’s decision. She said: “Our client is a vulnerable victim of trafficking and torture who has suffered significantly as a result of the Home Office’s unlawful decision-making. We are delighted that the court has rightly recognised that his removal to France was unlawful and that he must therefore be brought back to the UK.

“This is a highly significant decision; for our client, for other victims of trafficking who may have been unlawfully removed to France and for ensuring that the rule of law is upheld.”

Elizabeth Cole, a solicitor at Duncan Lewis, also welcomed the decision. Her asylum seeker client in France, who took part in the legal challenge, now has a right to reconsideration.

“The court’s decision calls into question the lawfulness of previous removals under the UK-France treaty where a negative reasonable grounds decision was made or reconsideration was denied,” she said.

“We hope that this will allow a broader cohort of cases who have been removed to France unlawfully under the treaty to obtain justice and potentially return to the UK.”

Home Office sources say they are carefully considering the judgment, including their options for appeal.

Athens suitcase death: suspect admits hiding body

Greece: Greek authorities are investigating what may have motivated a 26-year-old Afghan man to kill a Scottish charity worker found dead in a suitcase in an abandoned building in Athens last month.

Inquiries have focused increasingly on Elisabeth-Jane Ross’s last few hours alive and police believe they hold the key to revealing why the 38-year-old was targeted.

On Sunday the suspect, identified as Sharif Ahmadzai, was accused of intentional homicide after three days of questioning. He will appear before an investigating magistrate to be formally charged on Wednesday.

George Kalliakmanis, the honorary president of the police officers’ association in Athens, told the Guardian the homicide division was now intent on discovering the motive behind “the murder” because the Afghan was continuing to deny any role in it, although he had confessed to hiding Ross in a suitcase.

“He has admitted to carrying her body to the site. Police have CCTV footage of him doing this on the night of 16 July. He has also

confessed to withdrawing €10,000 from ATMs using credit cards that belonged to her. But he has denied murder which police do not believe,” Kalliakmanis said.

The Afghan, a professional boxer in the lightweight division, is believed to have arrived in Greece via the island of Lesbos as a child refugee at the height of Europe’s migration crisis 10 years ago.He has been quoted as telling police he discovered Ross’s lifeless body in the first floor flat of an apartment block he helped manage in Exarchia, a bohemian district in downtown Athens popular among leftists, foreigners and NGOs.

Ahmadzai, who married a US citizen and devout Christian, Alaina Hall, in 2023, had keys to the flat where their own refugee solidarity group, Love Every Nation, regularly met.

Investigators have confirmed that Ross, a friend of Hall’s with similar volunteering experience and religious views, had moved to the apartment on 10 July after staying with Greek friends when she arrived in the Athens from Edinburgh on 26 June.

Her last telephone call was made from her mobile phone on the night of 15 July – three days before her body was discovered by a homeless man in an abandoned building in Kypseli, about two miles away.

Two possible scenarios in the run up to Ross’s death were being studied, police said. “We believe there was a confrontation,” said one source. “But was that spurred by Ross discovering the Afghan rummaging through her things and stealing her credit cards, or was it a case of sexual assault or the Briton spurning his advances?”Forensic scientists believe Ross was “likely asphyxiated” after an initial on-site postmortem, which showed there were no evident signs of injuries on her body. However, the autopsy was also deemed inconclusive because of advanced decay.

Further toxicological tests and analysis of vital organs are expected to determine the exact cause of death in the coming days.

Hall, who met Ahmadzai on Lesbos, is widely described as having played a “significant role” in the investigation.

Five indicators that your kitchen chimney may not be functioning



The main purpose of a chimney is to remove cooking vapors, grease residues, and food smells while cooking. Located directly above the stove, it discreetly gathers the smoke produced by the pan. However, frequent use can lead to a buildup that clogs its filters and reduces its suction power. Thus, how can you assess whether your chimney needs cleaning, maintenance, or replacement?

Rupali Singh, head of marketing at KAFF Appliances, shared five telltale signs that your chimney is no longer functioning efficiently, along with the possible reasons behind them and what you can do to address the problem.

“A chimney needs optimal maintenance to deliver its peak performance. Oftentimes, the accumulation of greasy materials and oils from everyday cooking starts to clog its filters, which diminishes its extraction efficiency long before any physical signs become apparent,” she noted.

How to know if your chimney is not working? Here are the five signs she listed which mean your chimney is not working:

1. Smoke hangs around longer than usual
- If you notice a cloud of smoke in your kitchen just after you’ve finished cooking, your chimney has

failed to suck the smoke. This happens because grease has begun to clog the internal filters and the exhaust duct, which stops the motor from functioning properly.

2. A layer of sticky grime on kitchen surfaces
- If the ceiling, tiles, and the upper part of cabinets are sticky or are coated in deep-yellow oil layers, then the chimney is having issues.
- A properly working chimney traps grease before it is able to get into your interiors. If the suction is less than ideal, or if the filters are blocked, then grease has no other place but to settle on your interiors.

3. Loud, unusual vibrations and noise
- Chimneys typically produce a gentle whirring sound while operating. A sudden increase in noise may indicate a problem with the motor or blower fan. Grinding, rattling or straining noises may suggest that these components are working harder than usual. Excessive oil buildup can unbalance the fan blades or damage the motor bearings, resulting in unusual noise and vibrations.
4. Lingering food odours across the house
- If the smell of last night’s fish fry or an earlier meal lingers in the living room or bedroom, your chimney may not be working efficiently. A properly functioning chimney creates a negative-pressure zone that helps draw cooking odours out of the kitchen.
- Strong food smell spreading across different rooms may indicate poor suction.
- As a result, stale, odour-filled air remains indoors and circulates throughout the house.
5. Fails the simple ‘paper test’
- Switch on the chimney and set it to its maximum speed. Hold a sheet of newspaper or a paper towel against the suction zone or filter. A properly functioning chimney should immediately pull the paper towards the filter and hold

it in place. If paper does not stick, it may indicate that the chimney’s extraction power has weakened. What should you do if your chimney is not working properly?

The expert also shared what you should do if your chimney’s motor is too old. According to her, simply replacing the motor may not be an effective long-term solution. She recommended, “If the motor is old, noisy, or malfunctioning, any replacement motor can have similar problems sooner or later. She elaborated on the advantages, stating, “BLDC motor chimneys stand out from conventional motors by offering enhanced suction power while utilizing less electricity. Additionally, their lack of carbon brushes results in significantly reduced noise and friction. Consequently, they operate quietly and are more energy-efficient.”

Rupali further stressed the importance of addressing a malfunctioning chimney, noting that grease buildup can compromise indoor air quality and pose a fire risk. Nevertheless, she indicated that replacement might not be essential. She remarked, “In many cases, thorough cleaning or replacing clogged filters can restore the appliance’s functionality for a period of time.”

The Influence of Home Fragrances with a Wellness Focus on Modern Gifting Customs

The practice of gifting in India is undergoing a subtle yet notable change. It has evolved beyond impulsive choices or simple decorative items; modern alternatives reflect a deeper purpose, providing gifts that promote wellbeing, stir emotions, and effortlessly blend into everyday routines. Home fragrances have become central to this evolution, positioning themselves as a contemporary method of meaningful celebration. From diffusers and candles to sensory bath products, fragrance-based gifting is transforming the way people express care, foster connections, and convey a sense of luxury.

What Experts Are Saying About The Shift

As Gayatri Arora, Founder of Rose & Willow, explains, “People now want to gift products that genuinely add value to someone’s life. A well-crafted fragrance has the power to change how we feel and transform everyday spaces.” This rising preference for emotional depth and sensory richness is reflected across the industry.

Umashan Naidoo, Head – Customer & Beauty, Trent Ltd., observes, “This festive season, we’re seeing a strong shift towards gifting that feels personal, thoughtful, and sensorial.” He adds that fragrances resonate because “a scent carries an intimacy that very few gifts can offer.”Ridhima Kansal, Director of Rosemoore, highlights that, “Gifting has moved from conventional objects to experiences that feel personal, grounding, and emotionally resonant.” She notes that home fragrances are no longer decorative afterthoughts but essential tools to change mood, invite calmness, and dictate the atmosphere of a room. Why Sensorial Gifts Are Taking Centre Stage

Across homes and celebrations, fragrance-led gifting is gaining relevance for its ability to blend luxury with mindfulness. Consumers today seek products that don’t just look elevated; they must feel elevated. Clean formulations, sophisticated notes, and intentional design ap-

peal to those who value experiences over objects. Arora notes that people now gravitate toward fragrances that evoke warmth, clarity, and positivity, while Naidoo underscores that modern shoppers are choosing scents as an experience, guided by mood-driven profiles that reflect wellness-led lifestyles. Kansal adds that diffusers, candles, and essential oil blends are beloved for transforming routine environments into restorative spaces – something increasingly prized as people prioritise slow living and small moments of calm. A strong cultural shift toward mindful, sensorial living is shaping what gifting means today.

This includes a growing appetite for clean ingredients, long-lasting notes, and elegant packaging that communicates care. With people spending more time at home, fragrances have become a subtle form of self-care – one that nurtures routines, enhances ambience, and adds softness to everyday corners.

Tie-dye kurtas are bringing joy back to regular ethnic attire

In 2026, tie-dye is subtly returning to Indian wardrobes, but this time it feels much more sophisticated. Designers are embracing handcrafted Shibori techniques, soft ombre effects, and artistic dye patterns that give everyday kurtas a fresh, modern appeal. In the past, tie-dye was associated with beach vacations and oversized T-shirts. What makes tie-dye kurtas so wearable is that every piece feels slightly unique.

Unlike repetitive prints, the handcrafted dyeing process creates subtle variations that add character to the garment. Whether you prefer vibrant colours or muted earthy tones, tie-dye instantly makes even the simplest silhouette feel more interesting.

They’re also incredibly versatile. A straight-fit tie-dye kurta works beautifully with cigarette pants for work, while kaftan-style versions are perfect for holidays, brunches or relaxed weekends. Add silver jewellery, kolhapuris or even white sneakers, and you’ve got an outfit that looks thoughtfully styled without trying too hard.

Another trend that’s becoming increasingly popular is Shibori; the Japanese tie-dye technique that’s now inspiring contemporary Indian ethnic wear. The result is cleaner, more geometric dye patterns that feel elegant rather than overwhelming. Paired with breathable fabrics like rayon and crepe, these kurtas become effortless all-day outfits. If you’ve been looking to refresh your ethnic wardrobe without buying heavily embroidered pieces, tie-dye kurtas strike the perfect balance between trendy and timeless.

Tie-dye kurtas for women

1. JD Finishing Women’s Orange Tie-Dye Kurta with Matching Pants: This coordinated kurta set is ideal if you want an outfit that requires minimal styling. The vibrant orange tie-dye print instantly brightens the look, while the matching pants create a polished finish.
- The V-neckline and relaxed silhouette make it comfortable enough for everything from festive lunches to casual family gatherings.
- Style tip: Pair with oxidised silver jewellery and tan sandals.
2. Tie Dye Multi Colour Printed Straight Kurti for Women: If you’re just starting to experiment with tie-dye, this straight kurta is an easy place to begin. The colourful print adds personality without feeling loud, while the simple silhouette keeps it suitable for everyday wear.
- It works equally well with jeans, leggings or straight-fit trousers.
- Style tip: Team it with white



palazzos and juttis for an easy daytime look.

3. Maaesa Tie and Dye Crepe Kaftan Kurta: Kaftans continue to dominate relaxed fashion, and this tie-dye version blends comfort with style beautifully. The flowy crepe fabric drapes effortlessly, making it ideal for vacations, resort wear or laid-back weekends when comfort comes first.
- Style tip: Pair with oversized sunglasses and flat sandals for a resort-inspired outfit.
4. Maaesa Handcrafted Tie & Dye Rayon Crepe Kaftan Dress: Lightweight rayon crepe makes this handcrafted kaftan incredibly breathable for warm weather. The relaxed fit creates effortless movement, while the handcrafted tie-dye keeps every piece feeling unique. It’s perfect for women who love easy, throw-on outfits that still make an impression.
- Style tip: Add chunky silver bangles and flats for an elevated boho look.
5. Women’s Shibori Tie-Dye Collared Kurta: The structured collar gives this Shibori kurta a slightly smarter feel than traditional tie-dye styles. It combines artistic dye patterns with a clean silhouette, making it suitable for office wear as well as casual outings. Style tip: Wear with cigarette trousers and loafers for a contemporary Indo-western outfit.
6. Women’s Tie-Dye Kurta with Palazzo Set: Nothing beats a coordinated ethnic set when you’re short on styling time. This tie-dye kurta and palazzo combination looks put together instantly while remaining lightweight and comfortable enough for all-

day wear.

Style tip: Finish with statement earrings and block heels.

7. Women’s Shibori Tie-Dye Collared Kurta: This alternate Shibori design offers a slightly different colour palette while retaining the same sophisticated aesthetic. The structured collar balances the artistic print beautifully, making it suitable for both work and casual occasions.
- Style tip: Pair with straight pants and minimal jewellery for a clean, elegant look.
8. Maaesa Tie and Dye Crepe Kaftan Kurta: or those who prioritise comfort without compromising style, this crepe kaftan delivers both. The relaxed fit allows unrestricted movement while the tie-dye pattern keeps the outfit visually interesting.
- Style tip: Add leather flats and a woven tote for an easy summer outfit.
9. Maaesa Tie and Dye Crepe Kaftan Kurta: This version offers another versatile colourway for anyone who enjoys the kaftan silhouette. Soft, breathable and effortlessly stylish, it’s one of those pieces you’ll keep reaching for throughout the season. Style tip: Style with layered necklaces and neutral sandals for a relaxed bohemian finish. Tie-dye has evolved far beyond its casual beginnings. Today’s tie-dye kurtas feel artistic, sophisticated and surprisingly versatile, making them an easy addition to any wardrobe. Whether you gravitate towards classic straight silhouettes, breezy kaftans or coordinated kurta sets, these pieces prove that handcrafted prints never really go out of style.

Cherry Cola Lips Represent the Most Exciting Comeback in Beauty Trends; Here’s How to Perfect This Look

The current trend on social media is Cherry cola lips. This can be regarded as beauty’s newest fascination or its beloved revival. Cherry cola lips are ubiquitous at the moment, appearing in celebrity makeup styles and a multitude of TikTok tutorials.

Here’s the thing, though, this isn’t exactly a new trend. If you’ve been following beauty for years, you’ll know cherry cola lips have always had a loyal fan base. What makes the trend so irresistible is its versatility. It’s bold enough to make a statement without feeling too dramatic and glamorous enough to elevate even the simplest makeup look. Whether you’re heading to brunch with friends, dressing up for an office party or attending a wedding, cherry cola lips have a way of pulling the entire look together in a snap.

Celebrities too have been quick to embrace the trend.

Hailey Bieber, Dua Lipa and Kylie Jenner have all been spotted wearing their own versions of the look, while closer home, Rekha’s timeless berry-brown pout and Janhvi Kapoor’s glossy burgundy lips prove just how beautifully the trend works on Indian skin tones.

What Exactly Are Cherry Cola Lips?

Think of the fizzy drink that inspired the name. Cherry cola lips blend chocolate brown, cherry red, berry and burgundy tones to create a perfect rich pout that looks fuller and more defined.

Unlike a classic red lipstick, the warm brown undertones soften the colour, making it far more wearable for everyday makeup while still feeling polished enough for evenings.

How To Ace The Cherry Cola Lip Trend

Start With A Smooth Canvas

But girls, before you reach for that lipstick, let’s

get one thing straight, no masterpiece was ever created on a patchy canvas. The same goes for your lips. Deep lip colours have a habit of highlighting every dry patch, so spend a minute prepping them first. Gently exfoliate with a lip scrub or even a soft toothbrush, then follow up with a nourishing lip balm. Give it a few minutes to sink in, and you’ll be rewarded with a smoother application and a lipstick that lasts much much longer. Define With A Brown Lip Liner

Now, we can’t stress this enough, if there’s one step you absolutely shouldn’t skip, it’s the lip liner. Trust us, a deep brown liner can take your lip game to places you didn’t even know it could.

For that signature ombre effect, makeup artists continue to swear by cult classics like M·A·C Lip Pencil in Chestnut and M·A·C Lip Pencil in Chicory. If you’re looking for wallet-friendly



alternatives, NYX Slim Lip Pencil in Espresso, Kay Beauty Lip Liner in Fame and Swiss Beauty Bold Matt Lip Liner in Dark Chocolate deliver a very similar effect without the luxury price tag.

Start by outlining your natural lip shape, slightly overlining the cupid’s bow

and the centre of your lower lip if you’re after a fuller-looking pout. Then gently blend the liner inwards using your fingertip or a lip brush. Layer A Cherry-Toned Lipstick

Now comes the fun part, the lipstick. Choose a deep cherry, berry or burgundy shade and apply it mainly

to the centre of your lips before blending it seamlessly into the liner. The goal is to create a soft gradient rather than a sharp contrast. If you’re in the mood to splurge, beauty classics like M·A·C Matte Lipstick in Diva, M·A·C Satin Lipstick in Paramount, Clinique Almost

Lip Balm Lipstick in Black Honey, NARS Audacious Lipstick in Bette and Charlotte Tilbury K.I.S.S.I.N.G Lipstick in Night Crimson perfectly capture the cherry cola aesthetic.

For those who prefer wallet-friendly options, Revlon Super Lustrous Lipstick in Black Cherry, Maybelline Superstay Vinyl Ink in Wicked and Kay Beauty Matte Drama Lipstick in Verve recreate the look beautifully without the luxury price tag.

Finish With Gloss

Here’s what really brings the trend to life, a glossy finish. A swipe of gloss is what gives cherry cola lips that juicy, shine that makes them look fuller and almost impossible to ignore. We suggest dabbing a little onto the centre of your lips for a subtle plumping effect or you can simply ignore the subtlety and go all in. Coat your lips generously for that ultra-glossy finish.

For the luxe version of

the trend, you can’t go wrong with Fenty Beauty Gloss Bomb Universal Lip Luminizer in Hot Chocolit, M·A·C Lipglass in Spice or Dior Addict Lip Maximizer in Mahogany. Shopping on a budget? Maybelline Lifter Gloss in Bronzed, e.l.f. Glow Reviver Lip Oil in Jam Session and Swiss Beauty Plump Up Wet Lip Gloss in Brown will deliver the same luscious, glass-like finish without making your wallet wince.

Small tip, Cherry cola lips naturally become the star of the show, so let them do the talking.

Beauty trends may come and go, but every once in a while, one earns a permanent place in our makeup bags. Cherry cola lips are exactly that kind of trend. So, the next time you’re tempted to reach for your trusty nude or classic red, consider giving cherry cola lips a chance, you might just discover your new signature shade.

Riva Kishan pokes fun at father Ravi Kishan's viral internet trend with a comic reel

Mumbai : If you’ve opened Instagram in the past few weeks, chances are you’ve come across a Ravi Kishan meme. Whether it’s his now-viral “Jaldi the late” remark, his accidental “home from work” slip instead of “work from home”, or his dramatic expressions and dance moves, the actor-politician has become one of the internet’s favourite meme templates. The

trend has become so big that even European football clubs Juventus and Borussia Dortmund recently joined in by sharing Ravi Kishan meme videos. Now, Ravi Kishan’s daughter, Rivva Kishan, has joined the fun.

Rivva shared a funny Instagram reel featuring her father, and fans couldn’t get enough of it. The video shows Ravi Kishan standing inside a fake red telephone booth,

pretending to be busy on a call. Rivva waits outside for her turn but is left waiting as her father refuses to step out, turning the simple moment into a hilarious sketch. She captioned the reel, “Mujhe bhi baat karni thi Maa se.” The reel became even more relatable because Rivva used Gucci by Aroob Khan as the background track, the same song that has become synonymous with Ravi Kishan



memes across Instagram. Over the past few months, Ravi Kishan has accidentally become one of India’s

biggest meme sensations. His slip of the tongue while saying “home from work” instead of “work from home” became an instant viral moment. Before that, his now-famous “Jaldi the late” phrase had already become meme material. The internet has also embraced clips from his interviews, speeches, dance videos and reality show appearances, often pairing them with trending

music and funny edits. When asked about constantly going viral, Ravi exclusively told CNN-News18, “I’m not trying anything. I’m not doing extra theatrical or anything or planning ki iss tarah bolunga. It’s just the moment I come and something happens to my body and words nikalte hai. Aur kuchh bhi hota hai, whether Parliament mein bhaag raha hoon ya

kuchh bhi hai, it becomes viral.” Ravi Kishan was recently seen on the reality show Alliance, where he participated alongside Rivva. His stint on the show ended early after he announced that he had to leave for “desh ki seva”, a moment that spawned another wave of memes online. Rivva continued on the show before being eliminated in the later weeks.

Preity Zinta reveals the deep emotional scars left by partition history



Mumbai : After a long break from films, Preity Zinta returns with Batwara-1947, a period film set against the backdrop of Partition. She talks about what brought her back to cinema, researching the period, balancing motherhood with the demands of a film shoot and how playing a woman from 1947 made her look differently at the freedoms women have today.

What touched me the most was reading about real families who believed they were leaving home only temporarily. Many buried their jewellery and valuables,

That emotional core convinced me to come back. Earlier, audiences identified actors with the characters they played. Today, because of social media, people know everything about actors, their daily lives, what they eat, what they wear. That mystery has disappeared. Also, films are no longer the only source of entertainment. People now have countless options. For a film to bring audiences to theatres, it has to offer a truly cinematic experience. Even today, many people still call me by my character names like Naina or Zara, and that shows how deeply those films connected with audiences. Very much. Life has changed completely. I am now a mother and a homemaker, so I brought a different perspective to this role. The shoot was intense rather than easy or fun. My kids were only two years old, so balancing motherhood with long shooting schedules starting at 6 a.m. wasn’t simple. But we completed almost the entire film in a single schedule of about two months.

Working on this film made me realise how fortunate we are to live in today’s India. I have always romanticised the idea of living in another era, but while shooting I constantly had to remind myself that the story was set in 1947. Whenever I suggested something, my character could do, Raj ji would say, “No, Preity, women didn’t have that freedom then. They cooked, stitched, managed the home and followed social norms.” That experience gave me a new perspective. Today, women have opportunities our grandmothers never had. We can build careers, run businesses, choose our partners, travel, raise families and still return to work whenever we want. We often complain about life, but this film reminded me how privileged we are. I am incredibly grateful to have been born in this country and in this era, where women have so many choices and freedoms. That experience gave me a new perspective. Today, women have opportunities our grandmothers never had.

Nikita Rawal slams Ranbir Kapoor over old controversial comment

Mumbai : Actress Nikita Rawal has expressed disappointment with Ranbir Kapoor’s casting in Ramayana. In a recent interview, Rawal visited Kapoor’s old ‘beef eating’ comment and slammed the actor for playing the role of lord Ram in Nitesh Tiwari’s directorial. She urged everyone to boycott Ranbir Kapoor and demanded an apology from the actor.

“Jisne lakhon logo ki bhawnaon ke saath khela hai, seedha bol raha hai ki main beef khata hoon aur phir wohi Sri Ram ka kirdar nibha raha hai. Isko kya message denge, Mujhe lagta hai ki boycott kar do. I will keep running this #boycottRanbirkapoor. Aur agar usko lagta hai zara sa bhi ki use galati hui hai, iss character ke Pehle ya baad mein jo logon ko ahat pahunchi hai unse maafi mange aur keh de ki galti hui. Hum toh hai hi maafi dene wale log. Bharat hai hi ye hi logon ko jo maafi de dete hai. Aap aakar maafi mangiye nahi toh mujhe nahi lagta ki log aapko maaf kar payenge. Mere hisaab se aapka personl character Sri Ram ke character ko justify nahi kar paa raha hai,” she told Bollywood Mascot.

his roughly translates to, “Someone who has hurt the sentiments of millions of people by openly saying, ‘I eat beef,’ is now playing the role of Lord Ram. What message should we give him? I think he should be boycotted. I will continue running this



#BoycottRanbirKapoor campaign. And if he feels, even a little, that he made a mistake, then either before or after playing this character, he should apologise to those whose sentiments were hurt and simply say, ‘I made a mistake.’ We are people who believe in forgiveness. That is what India stands for—we forgive those who sincerely apologise. Come forward and apologise. Otherwise, I don’t think people will be able to forgive you. In my opinion, your personal character does not justify portraying the charac-

ter of Lord Ram.” Rawal further asked people to express their support to her by sharing their views on social media using the hashtag “#BoycottRanbirKapoor”. While Ranbir Kapoor is playing lord Ram in Ramayana, Sai Pallavi will be seen essaying Sita. Yash will also be seen as Ravan in the film. Helmed by Nitesh Tiwari, Ramayana: Part 1 is scheduled to release in theatres during Diwali 2026, while Ramayana: Part 2 is expected to arrive during Diwali 2027.

Sunny Deol reveals why his epic historical films on Ashoka and Prithviraj Chauhan were shelved

Mumbai : unny Deol and Rajkumar Santoshi was one of the most successful actor-director duos of the 1990s, who belted out blockbusters like Ghayal, Damini and Ghatak. But reports soon started doing the rounds that that they had a fallout. Deol reportedly approached Santoshi with a film proposal on Bhagat Singh, wishing to cast his brother Bobby Deol in the lead.

The director, however, wanted to cast Ajay Devgn or pivot to his commitments like Pukar. Speaking us to earlier, Santoshi had admitted that there indeed was a fallout between them and had stated that ‘where there is friendship and love, there is misunderstanding’. Now, they’ve reunited for Aamir Khan’s Batwara 1947, which releases 30 years after Ghatak. Talking



about it, Deol says that they were supposed to collaborate on a bunch of films over the past three decades but none of them could materialise. “We were trying to do a film together for quite sometime. In the early 2000s, we wanted to make films on Ashoka and Prithviraj Chauhan and a few others but kuch ho nahi raha tha. I think producers didn’t think of such as saleble,” he reveals.

The success of Gadar: Ek Prem Katha in 2001 didn’t turn the situation around either. “Then Gadar worked. After that, we got the chance to work on Batwara 1947. We’ve been sitting on this story since then. But no one was willing to back it. And then Aamir wanted to produce it. He really liked the subject. So, he took up the film. And that’s how the film got made,” Deol says.

socha ki story ko aisa rakhe ya waise rakhe [we didn’t want to take any sides],” he adds. So, what his biggest takeaway from the film? “So many innocent people lost their lives. Ultimately, the ones who suffered were all innocent people,” he states. Interestingly, Gadar: Ek Prem Katha also uses Partition as its backdrop. But Deol clearly points out that there’s no similarity between these tales.

“Sikander Mirza is very different from Tara Singh. He was a very fun-loving guy. He was very happy and a romantic sardar jo music bajaata tha. His wife was in a much different league than him. He never thought that he would meet someone like her. He married her. It was a pure love story. In Batwara, we didn’t get the chance to show any love story (laughs),” Deol says.

Elvish Yadav addresses viral dating speculations involving Jannat Zubair

Mumbai : Jannat Zubair has finally addressed the ongoing speculation about her relationship with Laughter Chefs co-star Elvish Yadav. In a recent interview, the actress dismissed rumours that the two are dating, describing the constant link-up speculation as “a little too much.” Jannat further made it clear that she does not appreciate the constant speculation surrounding her personal life.

“If they see someone and they like their bond, their friendship, they often become a hashtag. Often people start linking them. But I don’t think you should link them. Linking is something that is a little too much,” she said, as quoted by IANS. “As far as the bond is concerned, if someone likes it, then I think it’s okay to love them, to support them, to make their fan pages or address and do all of that. I think that



is very sweet and we appreciate that. That is absolutely no problem. But I just think that if we keep the link-up aside, then everything else is okay and welcome,” the actress added.

Back then, Elvish also took to Instagram and shared two photos with Jannat. Elvish wore a white kurta with crimson thread work on the yoke, sleeves, and hem of the garment. Jannat, on the other hand, stole the show with her stunning crimson chiffon saree. She paired

it with a sleeveless blouse. In the second picture, they were seen seated together in a car. Reacting to the picture, many people suspected that the duo were dating. Meanwhile, Jannat Zubair was previously rumoured to be dating Faisal Shaikh aka Mr Faisu. They worked together on several projects and often shared photos also with each other on social media. While the two never officially confirmed their romantic relationship, they reportedly broke up in early 2025.

Varanasi poster hype peaks ahead of Mahesh Babu's birthday



Hyderabad : Ahead of Mahesh Babu’s birthday on August 9, anticipation is running high among fans of the superstar, who are eagerly awaiting a major update from the makers of his upcoming film, Varanasi. In Tollywood, it has become customary for filmmakers to unveil a new poster, first look or teaser to mark a leading actor’s birthday, and fans are hoping Varanasi follows suit.

With nearly 80 per cent of the film already completed and Mahesh Babu’s look having been unveiled earlier, excitement surrounding the globe-trotting adventure has only intensified. Fans are now looking forward to another glimpse of the actor on his special day. Much like SS Rajamouli released fresh stills of Priyanka Chopra Jonas on her birthday, industry buzz suggests that the

filmmaker is planning a similar surprise for Mahesh Babu.

According to sources close to the production, the team is keen to celebrate the superstar’s birthday by unveiling new posters or stills that offer a fresh look at his character. On social media, fans have been sharing cryptic posts referencing “BOB” (Mahesh Babu’s popular nickname), “V-Neck,” and the “Rama Pyramid,” while speculating about a powerful running shot inspired by Lord Rama as the perfect birthday gift.

Reports also suggest that the next promotional asset from Varanasi is likely to be unveiled on August 9. The expected visuals are said to offer deeper insight into the film’s theme and Mahesh Babu’s character arc. With Rajamouli already kickstarting the film’s global promotional campaign through interviews with international media, expectations are sky-high. Whether the director chooses to capitalise on Mahesh Babu’s birthday or reserves bigger surprises for later remains to be seen.

Sourabh Raaj Jain slams khatron ke khiladi over inhuman rubber bullet stunt

Mumbai : Actor Sourabh Raaj Jain, who is widely loved for playing Krishna, has taken to his Instagram and, without naming anyone, called out reality shows for stooping to many levels just to get TRPs. While the actor chose not to name anyone, many viewers were linking his remark to Riteish Deshmukh and Farah Khan-hosted Lock Upp: Sach Ya Sazaa before Sourabh posted another story.

Sourabh Raaj Jain, in his note, wrote, “I was told to be quiet on this as it doesn’t concern me professionally at all... But I have to say this purely on the basis of humanity....” He further continued and add-

ed, “Reality shows need to have a reality check.... It’s insane how low they are going for the sake of TRPs. It is NOT entertainment.... It is sick, oppressive, inhuman, sadistic, and more, all combined together....” Further slamming the hosts of the show, he questioned how they are allowing it all to happen and concluded, “I wonder how well-known hosts of such shows let it all happen.... It’s really sad. While social media users thought he was talking about Lock Upp, his next story hinted that he was criticising Rohit Shetty’s Khatron Ke Khiladi for the rubber bullet task. In his next story, Jain wrote, “TRP IS considered for...



television viewership NOT OTT, Kripya thoda samjha karo..... Samajhdaar ko ishaara kaafi hai. Although I do believe irrespective of any platform there should be skill and art based content that add value mix with entertainment....not the regular nonsense.”

Hosted by Rohit Shetty, Khatron Ke Khiladi 15 premiered on Colors TV on August 1. After the episode aired, Gaurav Khanna and Karan Wahi shared Instagram Stories showing the injuries left behind by one of the show’s physically demanding tasks.

The Influence of Cristiano Ronaldo on India’s First-Ever Commonwealth Games Gold Medal in Judo



Glasgow: Cristiano Ronaldo, a football hero for Portugal, is undoubtedly one of the most significant sportsmen in the world, and his inspirational tale transcends national lines. The 41-year-old former Real Madrid and Manchester United star has inspired sportsmen from a variety of sports, including cricket, in addition to football players. Asmita, an Indian judoka who just won a gold medal at the Commonwealth Games, is the most recent to express her appreciation for Ronaldo. In a recent conversation, Asmita disclosed that Cristiano Ronaldo’s incredible life story served as

inspiration for her gold medal victory at the 2026 Commonwealth Games. “The person I watch and read about the most is Cristiano Ronaldo. He has gone through a lot of struggles in his life. I’ve followed his journey closely,” Asmita said in a video shared by Sony Sports Network. “He lost his father when he was 19, yet he still became the best player in the world. Today, the whole world knows who he is. I’ve watched his entire story and learned everything about his journey, so Ronaldo is the person who inspires me the most,” he added.

Asmita clinched the women’s -48kg gold medal after defeating Canada’s Heidi Quach in a gripping Commonwealth Games final that was decided in Golden Score, securing India’s first judo gold medal of the Games. She was later joined on the podium by Harsh Singh, who won gold, Yamini Mourya, who claimed silver, and Unnati Sharma, who bagged bronze, taking India’s judo medal tally to four. In the gold medal match, Asmita prevailed by Yuko (2-1) with a composed and determined display in the final. The final began as a closely contested affair, with both judokas engaged in intense grappling and repeatedly forcing each other towards the edge of the mat. Quach struck first midway through the contest with a throw to take the lead.

The Indian responded strongly despite receiving a Shido penalty, producing a quick throw of her own to level the scores. Asmita grew in confidence as the bout progressed, launching several attacking moves while defending resolutely against Quach’s attempts to regain the advantage. With the scores tied at the end of regulation time, the contest entered the Golden Score, where the first scoring action would decide the winner. In the extra session, Asmita maintained her composure and made a precise throw close to the mat’s edge to win the gold medal with a crucial Yuko.

While cleaning sewers or septic tanks, almost 500 people perished. Since 2019

New Delhi, Aug 05: Over the course of seven and a half years, about 500 sanitation workers in India perished while cleaning septic tanks and sewers, although none of these deaths were officially linked to manual scavenging. Between January 1, 2019, and June 30, 2026, 498 workers died while cleaning sewers and septic tanks, according to government statistics presented to the Lok Sabha. In a written response to a query from Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale revealed the numbers. The highest number of deaths was reported in 2019, when 132 workers died. Another 34 deaths were recorded in 2020, followed by 62 in 2021 and 88 in 2022. The number stood at 65 in 2023, 54 in 2024 and 47 in 2025. Sixteen deaths were reported in the first six months of 2026, taking the total to 498. Despite these figures, the government said: “No death has been reported due to manual scavenging.” The answer lies in how the work is classified. Under the definition cited by the government, manual scavenging involves manually handling human excreta from insanitary toilets, open drains, pits, railway tracks or other notified places before it fully decomposes. Hazardous cleaning, meanwhile, refers to manually cleaning a sewer or septic tank without prescribed protective equipment, cleaning devices and safety precautions. The Centre, therefore, recorded the 498 fatalities as deaths during hazardous sewer and septic-tank cleaning, rather than deaths due to manual scavenging. The reply also said a survey conducted across all districts during 2024-25 did not identify a single manual scavenger. All districts subsequent-



ly declared themselves free of manual scavengers. The latest finding contrasts with surveys conducted in 2013 and 2018, which identified 58,098 manual scavengers across 17 states. More than half were in Uttar Pradesh, where 32,473 people were identified. Maharashtra had 6,325, Uttarakhand 4,988 and Assam 3,921. The government also provided details of compensation paid in the 498 sewer and septic-tank cleaning death cases. It said the compensation amount was increased from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 30 lakh following a Supreme Court judgment in October 2023. The official data placed 345 cases in the full Rs 10 lakh payment category and 75 in the full Rs 30 lakh category. Partial compensation was reported in 22 cases, while payment could not be confirmed in 56. This means that in 78 cases, the data either showed par-

tial payment or did not confirm that compensation had been paid. Payment could not be confirmed in 20 of the 47 deaths reported in 2025. For 2026, full payment of Rs 30 lakh was confirmed in six of the 16 cases reported till June 30. The compensation status of the remaining 10 could not be confirmed. The Centre also said 89,915 sewer and septic-tank workers had been profiled under the National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem, or NAFMASTE, Scheme. The initiative offers financial assistance for mechanized sanitation equipment, health insurance, safety gear, and training. However, the government does not set a timeline for fully automating the cleaning of septic tanks and sewers. Additionally, it lacked a time-bound plan for rehabilitating impacted employees and their dependents or for recognizing them again.

Prior to the Asian Games, CWG Gold Medallist Harsh Singh plans to train in Georgia and Japan

Glasgow: Harsh Singh has already set his sights on the next challenge after making history as the first male Indian judoka to win a gold medal at the Commonwealth Games. In an effort to duplicate his accomplishment on a much larger scale, the current champion plans to practice in Georgia or Japan before the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya next month. “I’d want to travel to Georgia or Japan. For Indian judokas, these two nations are perfect. Georgia is among the strongest countries in judo, along with Japan. Our preparedness for the future will greatly benefit from the training there. As we prepare for the next level, if we train under coaches who have achieved Olympic glory, we will be able to accomplish what we are aiming for,” Harsh told PTI on the sidelines of a felicitation ceremony for the judokas.

At the BWF World Championships, PV Sindhu is ranked ninth, while Satwiksairaj Rankireddy/Chirag Shetty is ranked fifth

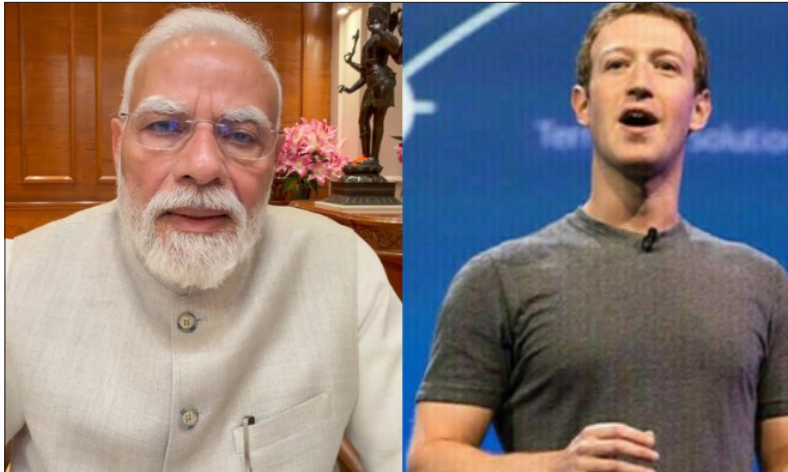


New Delhi: For the upcoming BWF World Championships, which will take place at the Indira Gandhi Stadium here from August 17–23, the top men’s doubles duo

of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty were given the fifth seeding, while two-time Olympic medallist Indian shuttler PV Sindhu was ranked ninth in wom-

en’s singles on Tuesday. The current Japan Open champion is Sindhu, while the gold medallists from the 2022 Asian Games are Satwik and Chirag. India has two entrants in each of the five championship categories, with at least one seeded entry in four of them. Apart from Sindhu and Satwik-Chirag, former world championships bronze medallist Lakshya Sen has been seeded 14th in men’s singles and the mixed doubles pairing of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto are seeded 15th. While the players qualified for the prestigious championships based on their world rankings of April 28, 2026, the seedings were decided on the basis of world ranking on July 28, 2026. Men’s singles world champion Shi Yuqi of China

Parliamentary Panel To Meta: “Apologize Over PM Video Or Lose Safe Harbour Protection”



New Delhi, Aug 05: Mark Zuckerberg has three days to apologize for the temporary removal of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s video from July 23 and take action against individuals involved, according to the Parliamentary Committee on Communications and Information Technology. The panel, headed by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, called the removal of PM Modi’s video a “attack on democracy” since he represents 1.4 billion Indians. The Safe Harbour Clause will be eliminated if Facebook does not prosecute people accountable in this case. It will be necessary for Mark Zuckerberg to provide an apology. If not, a lawsuit might be brought,” it stated. The removal of the safe harbour clause gives the green light to file FIRs directly against social

media platform officials. The central government will provide the green light, the committee warned. PM Modi’s post, which was first shared on Instagram and later on Facebook, marked his first direct selfie video that contained a message to Gen Z promising stringent measures against paper leaks amid the student protest spearheaded by the satirical Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) at the time. The Facebook version of the post was briefly restricted by Meta. Meta quickly restored the post after receiving a major backlash. Earlier this week, Meta officials faced tough questions from the government at a meeting with the Parliamentary panel. While the company apologised for the “technical glitch” that led to the removal of PM’s video, the IT ministry main-

After leaving CWG Silver, Neeraj Chopra is expected to face Arshad Nadeem and Rumesh Pathirage once again

Glasgow: Neeraj Chopra has already decided on his next goal after winning a silver medal at the Commonwealth Games (CWG) in 2026. The two-time Olympic medallist is preparing to race on August 21 at the Lausanne Diamond League, also called Athletissima. The Indian javelin star will compete against a strong group of foreign competitors, and it is anticipated that the race for the top podium slot will be more intense than it was in the Glasgow Games. With a huge 89.75-meter throw in the CWG Men’s Javelin Throw final, Rumesh Pathirage of Sri Lanka, the recently crowned Commonwealth Games champion and current global leader, defeated Neeraj to win the gold. The line-up features several other high-profile rivals, including Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan, reigning World champion Keshorn Walcott of Trinidad and Tobago, and former World and Olympic winner Anderson Peters. They will be joined by Tokyo silver medallist Jakob Vadlejch, Germany’s Julian Weber, and World Championship competitor Curtis Thompson. With five of these throwers having faced each other in the Commonwealth Games final only days prior, the event promises to be another thrilling high-stakes battle. In the men’s javelin throw final, Neeraj opened with 80.97m before improving to



85.83m in his second attempt, which eventually stood as his best throw of the competition. His remaining valid throws measured 81.29m and 80.73m, while his final two attempts were fouls. “I am very happy. I am always happy whenever the national anthem is played. But it’s ok [to win silver] as I did my personal best and my comeback is getting better,” he said after the silver medal win. Before the Asian Games 2026, which start in September, players like Neeraj and his competitors, Arshad Nadeem and Pathirage, will have the ideal opportunity to prove themselves in the Lausanne Diamond League. In the upcoming months, the trio and other elite athletes from across the globe are anticipated to compete against one another several times.

Punjab Police Bust an ISI-Backed Terror Module and Plan an Attack at Jantar Mantar

New Delhi, Aug 05: In a significant development, Punjab Police announced on Tuesday that it had dismantled two cross-border terror modules supported by the ISI and captured nine suspects—four of them were minors—along with weapons and ammunition. According to a preliminary inquiry, the accused’s foreign-based ISI handlers were attempting to enlist local youngsters to carry out terror-related actions, like as an attack at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar. Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav stated, “Amritsar Commissionerate Police made a significant breakthrough by busting two ISI-backed cross-border terror modules, apprehending nine accused, including four juveniles, and recovering three illegal pistols, four petrol bottle bombs, and nine live cartridges.” According to the police, the first module was caught from the Rajasansi area. It included Sukhman Singh and his three minor accomplices.

Police claimed that the module was tasked with carrying out an attack at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar during the recent student protests led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP). Sukhman admitted after questioning that he had been assigned to carry out an assault at Jantar Mantar during the recent demonstration and that he was in contact with an ISI handler stationed in Pakistan. According to the police, Sukhman also disclosed that he had traveled to Delhi with his friends but was unable to carry out the assault because of strict security. According to sources, Pakistani gangster and terrorist Shahzad Bhatti is behind this module in Punjab. The module that was earlier caught by Kolkata STF was also supposed to come to Jantar Mantar. They were also in touch with Shahzad Bhatti’s people through more than six WhatsApp numbers. The investigation also revealed that the accused had been assigned the task of conducting reconnaissance of police build-

ings and police personnel in Punjab. The second module was busted during the investigation into suspicious CCTV cameras installed near some railway tracks that were discovered last month. The investigation also uncovered that the footage from such cameras near railway tracks was allegedly being shared with foreign handlers, the DGP said. Among those arrested are Vansh Kumar (19) and Anmol Singh alias Sahil (20) of Patti in Tam Taran; Hamman Singh alias Hammu (24), Sukhdev Singh (30) and Sukhman Singh (19) of Amritsar. The remaining four accused are juveniles, police said. Sharing operational details, Commissioner of Police (CP), Amritsar, Gurpreet Singh Bhullar said that acting on reliable intelligence, police teams intercepted Vansh Kumar along with his juvenile associate and recovered one illegal .32 bore country-made pistol, along with three live cartridges, from their possession.

Parties in Jammu and Kashmir observe August 5 as “Black Day” and stage demonstrations

Jammu and Kashmir, Aug 05: August 5, 2019, will go down in history as the day that a presidential decision abolished Article 370, which gave Jammu and Kashmir unique autonomous status. It made Jammu & Kashmir a Union Territory instead of a state. August 5 is observed as a “black day” by the ruling Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC), while the BJP views it as a day of Kashmir’s integration into the national mainstream. The Jammu and Kashmir Peo-

ples Democratic Party (JKPDP) has been calling for Article 370 to be reinstated. The PDP, under the leadership of President Mehbooba Mufti, organized a candlelight march in Srinagar on the eve of the seventh anniversary of the repeal of Article 370. Iltija Mufti, Mufti’s daughter, was arrested during demonstration, according to party members. “It’s a black night for Jammu and Kashmir. We have come out to protest... We will not remain silent till the time J&K issue is

resolved and Article 370 is restored,” said Mufti. PDP plans to hold protests across Jammu and Kashmir districts. The ruling National Conference has also announced protests at its party headquarters in Srinagar and across all districts. The party has termed August 5 as “black day.” “We observe August 5 as Black Day to mark the unconstitutional and unilateral abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir’s constitutional guarantees, and to register a strong protest against the BJP-led Central

Government’s persistent refusal to restore statehood despite repeated assurances,” said Rattan Lal Gupta, senior National Conference leader. In Delhi, National Conference member and parliamentarian Chowdry Ramzan has invited INDIA bloc members to join a protest outside Parliament House. While, INDIA bloc has largely remained silent on revocation of Article 370, almost all the parties including Congress have been demanding restoration of statehood.

Alcaraz Withdraws from Cincinnati Open, Delaying Comeback Ahead of US Open



New Delhi, : Carlos Alcaraz’s long-awaited return to competitive tennis has been put on hold after the Spaniard withdrew from the Cincinnati Open, raising fresh questions over his preparations for the US Open later this month. Tournament organisers confirmed on Tuesday that the world No. 2 will not feature in the ATP Masters 1000 event, where he was due to defend the title he won last year. However, neither Alcaraz nor his team publicly disclosed the reason behind the withdrawal. The decision comes

just days before the hard-court tournament begins and leaves the 23-year-old without a competitive match since April, despite recent signs that his comeback was nearing. “We know Carlos is doing everything he can to get back to playing tournaments as soon as possible,” Cincinnati Open tournament director Bob Moran said in a statement. “We wish him the best with his recovery and look forward to welcoming him back to Cincinnati in the future.” Alcaraz has not played since suffering a right wrist injury

during the Barcelona Open in April, a setback that forced him to miss several major events, including the Madrid Open, Italian Open, French Open and Wimbledon. In recent weeks, however, optimism had been building around his return. The seven-time Grand Slam champion shared videos and photographs of himself back on the practice courts, while Spanish media reported that his absence from the Canadian Open was part of a carefully managed recovery programme rather than a fresh setback. That had fuelled expectations that Cincinnati would mark his return to the ATP Tour. Instead, the Spaniard has opted to skip one of the biggest lead-up events to the US Open, although no official reason has been given for the decision. The withdrawal means Alcaraz misses a valuable opportunity to test his fitness and regain match sharpness before the year’s final Grand Slam. Cincinnati represented more than just another tournament for Alcaraz. As the defending champion, he was set to protect crucial ATP ranking points while also building momentum ahead of his US Open title defence.

R Praggnanandhaa Tops St. Louis Rapid, Moves Closer to Grand Chess Tour Finals

New Delhi, : Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa boosted his chances of qualifying for the Grand Chess Tour (GCT) Finals after finishing on top of the rapid section at the St. Louis Rapid & Blitz tournament on Tuesday. The 20-year-old scored 12 points from a possible 18 across the nine-round rapid event, showcasing remarkable consistency despite suffering his only defeat in the final round against Dutch Grandmaster Jorden van Foreest. The result allowed Praggnanandhaa to retain a one-point lead heading into the decisive blitz segment of the tournament. Praggnanandhaa’s campaign featured four victories and four draws before the closing-round loss, leaving him narrowly ahead of Uzbekistan’s Javokhir Sindarov, who sits second with 11 points. American Grandmaster Wesley So occupies third place



with 10 points. While topping the rapid standings gives Praggnanandhaa a crucial advantage, the tournament is far from over. The St. Louis Rapid & Blitz title will be decided after 18 blitz games, where each win is worth one point, unlike the rapid section where victories earn two points. Had the Indian defeated Van Foreest in the final rapid round, he would have entered the blitz

phase with a bigger cushion. Instead, he begins the final stretch with only a slender lead over Sindarov, who remains firmly in contention. The event carries a prize pool of USD 200,000, with the winner taking home USD 50,000. More importantly for Praggnanandhaa, a strong finish could significantly strengthen his hopes of securing a place in the prestigious

Grand Chess Tour Finals later this year. Sindarov is expected to be Praggnanandhaa’s biggest challenger during the blitz rounds, while Wesley So also remains within striking distance. A group comprising Levon Aronian, Anish Giri, Leinier Dominguez Perez and Vincent Keymer are all tied on nine points and could make significant gains in the faster format.

Vinicius Jr Thrives Under Mourinho Amid Ongoing Real Madrid Contract Uncertainty and Speculation



New Delhi : Real Madrid forward Vinicius Jr says he is enjoying life under new manager Jose Mourinho as the Brazilian begins pre-season preparations, even as uncertainty over his long-term future at the club continues. The 26-year-old, who has emerged as one of Real Madrid’s most influential players in recent seasons, struck a positive note after his second day of training

under Mourinho despite ongoing speculation linking him with a move to Premier League champions Arsenal. “It has gone very well, getting to know the new coach and the new players, and training very hard,” Vinicius told Real Madrid TV. “Mourinho wants me to be as I have always been: happy, cheerful and playing my football.” While Vinicius appeared relaxed on the train-

ing ground, negotiations over a new contract remain unresolved. The Brazil international has entered the final year of his current deal, with reports in Spain and England suggesting talks between the player and the club are continuing. Arsenal are reportedly monitoring the situation, although Real Madrid are keen to retain one of the club’s biggest stars rather than risk losing him on a free transfer next year. Since joining Los Blancos, Vinicius has established himself as one of Europe’s premier forwards, scoring 128 goals and providing 100 assists across all competitions. The winger heads into the new season after a demanding summer with Brazil at the FIFA World Cup, where the five-time champions suffered a surprise last-16 exit.

Vinicius finished as Brazil’s leading scorer in the tournament with four goals. Despite the disappointment on the international stage, the Brazilian is fully focused on preparing for the campaign ahead under Mourinho. “We have to prepare physically so that during the season we have fewer injuries and can count on everyone,” Vinicius said. “It was a good training session and we all left very tired, but now it’s time to rest for tomorrow. That’s how pre-season is and we have to be ready.” With Mourinho beginning a new chapter at the Santiago Bernabeu, Vinicius is expected to remain central to the Portuguese manager’s plans, even as questions over his contract continue to dominate the headlines.

Zaheer Khan Joins Jaffna Franchise as Co-Owner in Lanka Premier League Expansion

New Delhi, : Former India fast bowler Zaheer Khan has expanded his footprint in franchise cricket after joining the Jaffna franchise of the Lanka Premier League (LPL) as a co-owner following its acquisition by Stockholm-based global sports ownership group Anchor Sports AB. The franchise, previously known as Jaffna Kings, has officially been rebranded as Anchor Jaffna Kings, ushering in a new era under its new ownership. Anchor Sports owner Nagendra Siddoutam, along with Zaheer Khan, has taken over the franchise as part of the group’s growing investment in global cricket. Anchor Sports already owns the Antwerp Anchors in the European T20 Premier League in Belgium and the Vancouver Anchors men’s and women’s teams in Canada’s Super 60 League. The acquisition of the Jaffna franchise marks its latest expansion into franchise cricket. The ownership change comes at a positive time for the team, with Anchor Jaffna Kings currently placed in the top two of the ongoing LPL points table. Jaffna have been the



most successful side in the tournament’s six-year history, winning four championship titles. Welcoming the new owners, Anil Mohan, Chairman and CEO of Innovative Production Group, the tournament rights holder, said the franchise had set the benchmark for excellence in

the league. We welcome Anchor Sports on board and to the LPL family as they take over the iconic Jaffna franchise. Jaffna has been a legendary team in the six-year history of the league, winning four championship titles and setting the benchmark for excellence.

After CWG Success, Young India Eyes Glory at World Athletics U20 Championship Ahead

New Delhi: India’s impressive Commonwealth Games campaign may have just concluded, but the spotlight now shifts to the country’s next generation of athletes as the World Athletics U20 Championships get underway on Wednesday. A 36-member Indian contingent will compete across a range of events over the next five days, with several athletes arriving on the back of strong performances at the Asian U20 Championships earlier this year. The tournament, being held in Eugene, USA, is another opportunity for India’s emerging stars to test themselves against the world’s best junior talent, with an eye on progressing to the senior level in the



coming years. One of the biggest names in the squad is high jumper Pooja Singh, who heads into the championships in sensational form. The 20-year-old rewrote the record books at the Asian U20 Championships in Hong Kong by clearing 1.93m to win gold, breaking Sahana Kumari’s 14-year-

old national record of 1.92m. The effort also took her past the Commonwealth Games qualifying standard, underlining her credentials as one of India’s brightest athletics prospects. Another athlete to watch will be long jumper Shahnavaz Khan, who has steadily emerged as one of India’s most prom-

ising talents over the last 12 months. The youngster earned his place in the squad after consistent performances on the domestic circuit and will be hoping to make an impression on the global stage. Competing in a field packed with elite junior talent, the championships offer Khan an important opportunity to gain international experience and measure himself against the world’s best in his age group. India will also field athletes in the men’s javelin, 800m, race walk, relay events, discus throw, triple jump and hurdles, among others, as the country looks to build on the momentum generated by its successful Commonwealth Games campaign.

Himmat Singh’s Frustration Sparks Freak Run-Out, Forcing DPL Match into Dramatic Super Over

New Delhi : What looked like a costly moment of frustration turned into one of sheer relief for Himmat Singh and New Delhi Tigers in the Delhi Premier League (DPL) on Tuesday, as the captain effected a freak run-out off the final ball to force a Super Over in a dramatic finish. Chasing 136 in a 15-over contest, Outer Delhi Warriors needed just one run from the last delivery to seal victory. The batter attempted a big hit but could only push the ball straight down the ground. Although the single was never really on with Himmat positioned close to the non-striker’s end, both batters took off knowing it was the final ball of the innings. Himmat reached the ball in time but fumbled what appeared to be a straightforward run-out chance. In frustration, he kicked the ball away. In an extraordinary twist, the ball rolled directly onto the stumps at the non-striker’s end before Pratham Saluja could make his ground, result-



ing in a run-out and bringing the match level. The extraordinary sequence quickly went viral on social media. Himmat’s body language captured the drama of the moment as his frustration instantly turned into celebration after realising the ball had crashed into the stumps. Several of his teammates, who had their heads in their hands after the initial fumble, erupted in celebration as the match headed into a Super Over. Outer Delhi Warriors, however, held their nerve to win the contest

in the Super Over after surviving the dramatic finish. The incident has become one of the most talked-about moments of the ongoing DPL, with the final-ball drama drawing widespread attention online. Himmat made his Indian Premier League debut for Lucknow Super Giants in 2025 after joining the franchise as a replacement for Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh. He had caught the eye during the 2024 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, scoring 197 runs in eight innings at a strike rate of 148. The right-handed batter is yet to make a significant impact in the IPL. He did not get an opportunity to bat in the three matches he played during the 2025 season. In 2026, he featured in six matches, scoring 92 runs at an average of 30.67 and a strike rate of 133.33. The 2026 edition of the Delhi Premier League began on July 31. The league stage will conclude on August 25, with the final scheduled to be played on August 30.

PV Sindhu Among Four Seeded Indian Entries at BWF World Championships

New Delhi : Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu has been handed the ninth seeding in women’s singles, while the former Asian Games gold medal-winning pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will start as fifth seeds in men’s doubles for the upcoming BWF World Championships, scheduled to be held at the Indira Gandhi Stadium from August 17 to 23. India will field two entries across all five categories at the marquee event on home soil, securing a seeded spot in four of them. Former World Championships bronze

medallist Lakshya Sen is seeded 14th in men’s singles, while the mixed doubles tandem of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto has been handed the 15th seed. Qualification for the tournament was determined by the BWF World Rankings as of April 28, 2026, whereas the final seedings were finalised based on the world rankings released on July 28. Sindhu enters her home World Championships on the back of a significant resurgence. The former world champion snapped a near three-year title drought on the BWF World Tour by lifting the Japan Open Super 750 crown,



beating top-ranked opposition including defending world champion Akane Yamaguchi en route. Sitting

just outside the top eight seeds means Sindhu could face high-ranked opposition as early as the Round of 16.

India’s premier men’s doubles pairing captured the Singapore Open Super 750 title earlier this season, end-

ing a two-year tour drought. However, their preparations have been tempered by fitness management after Satwik suffered a recurring shoulder strain during the summer tour, forcing a mid-match retirement at the Japan Open. The pair subsequently withdrew from the China Open to focus entirely on rehabilitation ahead of the marquee event in New Delhi. Lakshya Sen’s season highlight came at the All England Open Championships, where he mounted an impressive run to the final, eliminating world No. 1 Shi Yuqi along the way. Although his subsequent

BWF tour results have been mixed, his 14th seeding guarantees protection from top-tier opponents in the opening rounds. Kapila and Crasto have established themselves as India’s leading mixed doubles entry, backed by consistent quarter-final and semi-final appearances on the World Tour, including a deep run at the Singapore Open. Their top-16 seeding ensures a favorable early path in the draw. Reigning world champion Shi Yuqi (China) takes the top seed. Women’s Singles: World No. 1 An Seoung (South Korea) leads the seedings, followed by

defending world champion Akane Yamaguchi (Japan) as second seed, and China’s Wang Zhi Yi and Chen Yufei as third and fourth seeds respectively. Doubles Top Seeds: South Korea’s Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae top the men’s doubles draw. China holds top billing in both women’s doubles (Liu Sheng Shu & Tan Ning) and mixed doubles (Feng Yan Zhe & Huang Dong Ping). The official draw will take place in New Delhi on Wednesday. Final seedings remain subject to minor adjustments should any seeded player or pair withdraw prior to the draw.